

ITALIAN VIGNETTES



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*Italian
Vignettes*

*by
Mary W. Arms*



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To
K. W. A. and J. T. A.
and the
Memory of Days in Italy.

1921 187

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I
IN FAËRY LANDS

IN FAËRY LANDS

THE little toy engine puffs and wheezes, and gives its shrill baby whistle; the guard toots his little tin horn, and cries “partenza”; there is a last shuffling of belated passengers, a slamming to of doors, and you are off —out of the dimness of the Naples Station into the sunlight of the open country, out from

“The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan”

into the faëry land of a poet’s dream.

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With careful consideration and frequent pauses, the train that is acting as your magic carpet bears you on through ever-unfolding loveliness of color and form. On one side, the turquoise Bay, dimpling under the light kiss of the morning breeze; on the other, the growing majesty of Vesuvius, from whose crest faint curls of smoke, like incense, float upwards and are lost in the luminous air. Now you pass a quaint village, its white houses weather-stained into harmony with the surrounding blues and greens and golds, yellow sticks of macaroni drying on the roofs or hung fringe-like between sticks in the patch of ground no smallest hut is

In Faëry Lands

without. Now orange-groves, like other and vaster Gardens of the Hesperides, thrust their gold-laden branches almost within reach of your hand.

After a while the train strikes inland. The Bay and its rocky crescent of shore are blotted out, and the mountains that have been serving as a shadowy background begin to reach green-veiled arms about you. Closer and closer they come; and the air seems to grow purer, breathing down from their heights; and the laughter of falling water answers the tooting of the guard's tin horn as you pause at station after station. Finally "La Cava" is

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called—a hamlet in nowise differing, it would seem, from all the others you have watched go by, yet forever to be distinguished in your memory. For is it not the spot where you and the toy engine part company; the spot where, perhaps, you lunch, drinking liquid sunshine that is called *Lagrime Cristi* and eating certain grapes that have been brought to a perfection of lusciousness by boiling in wine and spices; above all, the spot whence you enter—borne this time by carriage—into the latter and most wonderful part of the day's dream? Over a road that winds in serpent coils up and down the hills, lies your new route; through vivid

In Faëry Lands

villages and under frowning, ruin-crowned bluffs; across deep gorges that seem but perilously spanned by their airy bridges; past groves of oranges and lemons glowing in the sunlight under the emerald of their leaves; through a country that grows more wildly beautiful at every turn till your eyes and your mind are alike almost overstrained with the grandeur, the color, the harmony, the poetic and dreamlike enchantment of it all.

At Vietri the road comes out on the Gulf of Salerno, and thenceforward follows closely the windings of the coast, so the familiar sea-blue is once more an element in the color scheme,

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deepening into strange greens and purples in the shadow of the cliffs. There is added, too, the brilliant picturesqueness of the *marine*, the tiny beaches which here and there find place in a cleft of the rocks, where the wavelets break in white foam and the gay stripes of the fishermen's boats make a carnival of color on the brown sand. As the afternoon declines you may see the fishermen themselves returning from their labors, and the *marine* alive with villagers—the men swarming about the boats, the women in their bright dresses laughing and chattering as they wait to help carry the fish up to the houses. It makes a series of charming pictures,

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framed by the enclosing bluffs that are getting an added touch of sternness now the light is fading. This sternness is perhaps the most surprising note in the landscape, especially if you are of those in whose imaginings Southern Italy is pictured all smiles and placidity. These giant peaks, these deep and narrow valleys, these glimpses of distant snow-mountains, might almost delude you into believing yourself in Switzerland. But no. The lemon orchards, laid out terrace on terrace wherever an indentation makes a sheltered spot on the cliffside, their pale yellow fruit covered from the night cold by ingenious thatch roofings; the

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ruined watch-towers and monasteries of a bygone age; the villages clinging to every available spur, with their half ruinous houses—white and salmon-pink and baby-blue—built up one against the other and seeming a part, almost, of their rocky hold; the wayside shrines before which kneel the little brown cowherds, or the loathsome beggars, or the wrinkled old women bowed beneath the load of their faggots; the very cliffs themselves, honey-combed with grottoes and twisted into a thousand strange, fantastic forms as of towered castle or fortress—all these breathe the enchantment that is of Italy alone.

And it is part of this enchantment

In Faëry Lands

also that, when the sunset has strewn the still waters with gold, with rose-leaves and violets, and the snow-mountains have blushed and glowed and then paled into dim grayness, you should come—driving among and beyond the twinkling lights of Amalfi—to a flight of stone steps climbing a dusky height, and halting there, be told that your lodging for the night lies above, in the ancient Convent of the Cappuccini. A Convent!—no other resting-place would have made fitting conclusion to the day's dream. What matter that the Convent is now a hotel, that blue-bloused porters swarm around your luggage instead of lay-brothers, and

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that instead of the prior's *pax vobis-cum* you are welcomed at the entrance by the broken English of the little *directrice*? These are superficial things. The reality lies in the sense of profound calm, of out-of-the-worldness, which comes over you as you mount the last step and find yourself between a flower-scented terrace that stretches into the shadows on the one hand, and glimmering views of a low, rambling building, clinging to a shelf of rock on the other. And when you have entered the building, and threaded the long corridors, and supped in the vaulted dining-room, and seen the tiny chapel; above all, when you enter the



A flower-scented terrace . . .

In Faëry Lands

little white-washed cell allotted you as a sleeping room, you will be unimaginative indeed, if you fail to see wavering shadows of cowl and gown and hear the soft patter of sandalled feet, as the ghosts of the Capuchin fathers come to give their benediction to the sojourner in the fair eyrie they created so long ago to be the home of their prayers and aspirations.

Nor does the next morning's clear light chase away the monastic illusion—especially if you have chanced to arrive on a Saturday night. Then your waking is made musical with the sound of many church-bells, and on the white road that winds along by the foot of

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the steps you may see passing figures of priests and peasants on their way to Mass. A bright Sunday peacefulness lies over all the scene, as you look out upon it from the wonderful terrace that you only half divined in the darkness of your arrival, and that you now find to be a broad walk, roofed with over-lacing grape-vines, built along a ledge of rock, with the sheer cliff going down from it on one side and the gold-laden branches of orange trees overhanging it on the other, while against the soft brownish-gray of its stone columns vines and blossoming plants make bright splotches of color. Below you is the town—such a quiet-seeming little

In Faëry Lands

town that you find it hard to realize its stirring memories of the day when it contended with Pisa and Genoa for the empire of the seas, when its merchants gave laws to commerce, and its scientists gave the compass to the use of sailors of all time. Into the golden distance that holds Paestum stretch the blue waters of the Salernian Gulf; and all around you are the mountains, the further ones snow-touched, the nearer giant peaks softened with patches of green.

It would hardly seem possible to be more utterly taken out of the busy world of to-day, but there is a still higher solitude to which you may pen-

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erate if you will. The little village of Ravello, “molto antico e molto interessante”* as your coachman will probably tell you, is nested yet nearer the clouds. A winding road leads to it, ascending inland between slopes starred with delicate sweet-alyssum, fragile cyclamen, exquisite lavender crocus, and gay white daisies; with constant glimpses of terraced lemon-orchards sheltered in some deep gorge, and the ruins of old watch-towers and monasteries detaching themselves darkly against the luminous blue of sky. The village itself consists of a handful of picturesque houses clustered

* “Very old and very interesting.”

In Faëry Lands

about one of those worn old stone fountains which bear such close kinship to the wells pictured in the illustrated Bibles of one's childhood. It boasts a Cathedral, on whose interior, however, the vandal hand of "modern improvement" has been laid to such an extent that its chief interest—aside from the quaint and beautiful 13th Century pulpit and *ambo*—is to be found in the genre scenes you may often surprise within its walls. Perhaps you will stumble upon a Sunday-School class in full operation, in which case your attention will be likely to wander from the sacristan's explanation of sacred relics to the little village tots who sit so

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primly on the stiff-back chairs, their round dark eyes solemnly fixed on the black-robed priest facing them, their shrill voices sounding in chorus in answer to his deeper-toned questions.

But the pride of Ravello lies not so much in its Cathedral as in the dwelling of its one-time lords—the Palazzo Ruffolo. It is a very irregular and wholly enchanting commingling of old and new, of war and peace and the poetry of nature, with its strong mediæval tower, its delicate and graceful Moorish cloisters—half veiled by trailing vines—and its fragrant garden where English daisies grow placidly in the stately shadow of the palms. The Signora

In Faëry Lands

Padrona lives here quite alone, the gardener will tell you—"an old lady, si, si; seventy-eight years old."

"And has she no children, no relatives?" you ask.

"No, no—alone, always quite alone."

An enviable fate, perhaps, to live your last years out thus restfully, remote from all the world save the narrow little world of the village; to forget all fever and fret in the antique quiet that clings about old walls; to still your passions into harmony with the eternal majesty and breadth of the grave mountains and the bright waters that play about their feet. At any rate, you carry even from your transient vision of high

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Ravello the benediction of these things.
And when the time comes for you to de-
part from Amalfi's white monastery
also, you take up your task, down here
in the active world, with a better cour-
age because you know that even in the
worst heat of the day you can, by grace
of the dear gift of memory, cross the
seas once more, and hear again the
nightingale singing by those

“ Magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn.”

II
TO MARIGLIANO

To MARIGLIANO

IT was a Sunday morning in February, one of those exquisite mornings with which Italy has a habit of upsetting the season reckoning of the traveller who has left winter raging behind him, and steps suddenly into radiant spring. The Bay of Naples lay like a vast turquoise pavement under the turquoise vault of the heavens, with Capri rising altar-like in its midst; from Vesuvius soft puffs of white smoke mounted lazily into the luminous air; and a wandering minstrel down some side street sang *Addio, mia bella*

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Napoli with the pathetic conviction of one approaching exile.

“ Del ciel l’azzurro fulgido,
La placida marina,
Qual core non inebria,
Non bea di voluttà ! ”

Suddenly I remembered Sebastiano and the promise I had made before I sailed over to this “ peaceful shore ” which had been his birthplace and by which his parents still lived. A vivid picture of the eagerness that lit up his eyes and his whole round face when he learned that I was bound for Naples, flashed across my mind.

“ The Signorina goes to Naples?
Then will the Signorina not see my

To Marigliano

father and mother and salute them for me?—and my two sisters also, and the little brother, yes?"

The Signorina had signified her perfect willingness to salute his entire family, including aunts and cousins, collectively and individually, if such were his desire. Only, did they really live in Naples itself? Certainly they did—or so near that it was the same thing. And would the Signorina be the bearer of a letter and a "beautifulness" to Sebastiano's mother? The Signorina was again acquiescent, only stipulating that the "beautifulness" should be of a size compatible with steamer luggage. I may add that

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when finally purchased and brought out for inspection, this article proved to be a pea-green table-cover embroidered with violently pink roses. It was very cheerful, if at first sight somewhat startling, and it was committed to my charge with elaborate and earnest instructions as to its safe delivery. In the course of these instructions it had come out that Sebastiano's paternal home was in a village called Marigliano.

"But you said Naples, Sebastiano," I had objected.

"Eh, Signorina, it's all the same, it's so near—and then the road, Signorina, such a road! Like the floor of a palace

To Marigliano

for smoothness and cleanliness. And when you come to Marigliano, you will ask for the house of Sebastiano Esposto, dealer in fine wines—and when you are at the door, there will come out a woman, si, Signorina. But you will not say to her all at once, ‘I come from Sebastiano,’ no, no. You will say: ‘My good woman, have you by any chance sons in America?’ And she will burst into tears, crying, ‘Ah, my Sebastiano!’—and so you will know it is my mother, Signorina. And you will say: ‘Be comforted, then. I myself, with these my own eyes, have seen your son, and he is fat, and well, and beautiful.’ ”

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The memory of this conversation it was which came to me, as I listened to the street musician singing the “Farewell to Naples,” and I promptly announced that Sebastiano’s commission must be delayed no longer in fulfillment. As a first step we would inquire how far it really was to Marigliano. We did—and learned, somewhat to our dismay, that it was a good thirteen miles or more.

And how could one get there?—by tram, by the steam-cars?

Eh, no; what should trams and steam-cars be doing in that direction? No *forestieri* ever went to Marigliano.

One must take a carriage then?

To Marigliano

Assuredly, if one desired to go. But there was indeed nothing to be seen there; our excellent selves might be certified that *forestieri* never thought of going—

“So much the better,” said we, and promptly started in search of a carriage.

An hour later we were out of Naples and well on our way along the road that Sebastiano had likened to the floor of a palace. It wound inland, giving one—in compensation for the blue Bay left behind—a view of broad fields stretching warmly away on either hand, some flaunting garlands of grape-vines, some laid out in trim vegetable patches; while

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in the distance to the right, Vesuvius still kept watch. Occasionally a tiny house, time-worn and weather-stained into colorful picturesqueness, detached itself against the green background. Once we passed what had evidently been a gateway of some pretension. It was of white stucco, mellowed into harmony with its surroundings, and its arch framed a picture worthy of a Theocritan idyll. A two-wheeled cart, its shafts resting on the ground, occupied the center, and in the cart stood a youth who might have just stepped out from among the statues in the Naples Museum. The slender figure with its proud carelessness of bearing was that



Peasant Cart

To Marigliano

of the young Bacchus; so too were the bare, bronzed legs, the wealth of dark curls piled above the low brow, and most of all the air as of one joyously untouched by the cares and sadness of the world. Eternal magic of Italy! —in whose light the very peasants appear as gods, and the homeliest scene gives out a thousand graces of poetic suggestion.

The further we progressed on our way, the more evident did it become that foreigners on the Marigliano road were indeed a novelty. The peasants who passed us, out holiday jaunting in their gaily painted two-wheeled carts, stared after us with frankest astonish-

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ment; a gleam of curiosity lightened the wrinkled, toil-deadened faces of the old women mounted on their tiny gray donkeys; and even the appearance of a bridal party in full regalia could not wholly take from us the public attention, though it entirely engrossed our own. The newly married couple were seated side by side in an open carriage, that none of their glory should be hidden from the gaze of the world. The bride, a full-blown *contadina* beauty attired all in white, wore a massive gilt crown above her veil, and was hung as thickly with chains and baubles as though she were a votive image. Anything more utterly and beatifically self-

To Marigliano

complacent than her expression as she leaned back, quite overshadowing the insignificant male creature beside her, I have never in my life seen. It was her hour of triumph, this slow progress before the admiring or envious groups of her fellow-villagers.

“Are they on their way home from the church?” I asked our coachman.

“Not on their way home, no, Signorina,” he replied. “They will drive up and down the road two, three hours yet, that they may show themselves. It is the custom so. Then all the *ragazze* see what a fine thing it is to be married.” And with a sage nod, the *vetturino* whipped up his horses as we approached

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a village. There were some half dozen of these hamlets to be gone through before we came to Marigliano, and at the entrance to each one the same performance was repeated. The driver would rouse his sturdy little beast with loud encouragement and mighty crackings of his whip, and we would rattle down the single street at a gallop, a dozen or so dogs barking madly at the wheels and all the inhabitants turning out to see, from the urchins who seemed to spring miraculously from the ground, to the men playing cards at little tables outside the *osterie* (inns). Each time I would ask: "Is this Marigliano, then?" And each time the answer

To Marigliano

would be: “Not yet, Signorina. Still a little patience.”

To Marigliano, however, we came at last, and found it patterned after all the previous hamlets, with the road forming a central street from which the houses straggled off on either side. A very little inquiry established the exact location of the dwelling of “Sebastiano Esposito, dealer in fine wines”; and as our carriage stopped before the low arch of the doorway, Signor Esposito himself came out, followed by a short, round little woman, whose face wore the prematurely aged look of the worker in the fields. We did not follow strictly the lines laid down by the

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younger Sebastiano for the ensuing scene; but when it finally penetrated to the understanding of his father and mother that we actually came from that far-off America that had swallowed up their son—that we even brought a message from him—there was no lack of dramatic effect. We were enveloped in a sort of exclamatory cloud, and borne somehow out of the carriage and through the low arch-way into a little walled space, half court, half garden, where a wooden table stood under a scraggly tree and a few hens wandered domestically about. Here I told my tale—how Sebastiano was at work on the great new railway station being

To Marigliano

built in the city of Washington, which was the capital of the Stati Uniti; how he was beginning to learn a few words of English; and was “fat and well and beautiful.” Also how he desired that his good father and mother should send him by me cloth for a suit of wedding clothes, not because he was going to be married but “because in America they have the habit of going clean”—and apparently nothing short of an Italian wedding garment could come up to the American ideal in this respect. I ended by presenting the letter from Sebastiano himself, and the package containing the rose-embroidered “beautyfulness.”

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It was the “little brother,” a stocky urchin of twelve with the round face and merry eyes of his senior, who read the letter. His father stood at one side watching him, evidently divided between interest in the news from his eldest son and pride in the scholastic attainments of his youngest. One of the sisters was beside my chair—the other, I was informed, was away at a *festa*—and from time to time as the reading progressed, she would put out a timid hand and touch my sleeve, as though to assure herself of the reality of the scene. Only the mother was absorbed beyond any other consciousness in the word from over the sea.

To Marigliano

She leaned towards the reader with a tense eagerness, her wrinkled brown face working with emotion, the tears running unheeded down her cheeks to drop on the “beautifulness” she held tightly clasped in her two arms. Nothing would induce her to open the package, but now and then she carried it passionately to her lips.

“The Signorina must pardon her,” said her husband apologetically, when the letter was finished. “We have not heard from our son for many weeks; and each day she has journeyed to the Post Office, *poverina*, and come back weeping because there was nothing. This is a blessed hour for her.” The

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Signorina's own eyes were not quite dry as she protested against the need for apology.

Then our host began to bestir himself with zealous hospitality, and would have spread the table then and there with everything in his larder and even, I think, have slaughtered one of the wandering hens the better to do honor to the occasion, had we not protested that we had but just come from our *collazione* and could not conceivably partake of a single morsel. But a glass of one of the "fine wines" it was quite impossible to refuse; and presently a pitcher full of a pale topaz liquid appeared—"a wine you can

To Marigliano

drink like water, Signorina; made from our own grapes."

So we sat on in the little court, sipping and talking, till the shadows grew long and our coachman impatient. And when the good-byes did come at last to be said, they were said as between old friends.

"Never shall we forget this afternoon, Signorina," said Sebastiano's father earnestly as he stood beside the carriage. And looking back, as we rattled away down the Marigliano street, we felt that neither should we forget the group we left waving to us from the doorway—the stalwart man; the sturdy boy with the merry eyes; the

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pretty, curly-haired girl; and above all the mother, with her toilworn face illumined by that love which is the golden thread that makes all womanhood akin.

III

INTO THE GOLDEN
AGE

INTO THE GOLDEN AGE

“ Many . . . flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.”—*Shakespeare*.

THIS is not an epoch which takes kindly, on the whole, to life in a Forest of Arden. Nevertheless, scattered here and there even through our workaday world are oases of peace where the Golden Age does seem to have lingered, in all its charm of simplicity and glad youthfulness; and of all these spots, surely there is none fairer than the island on whose cloudy

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mass the eyes of the sojourner in Naples so often turn. Capri!—there is a foretaste of enchantment in the very sound of the word, as though the Isle of Goats were rather an Isle of Dreams, radiant with all the glories of imagination.

And an Isle of Dreams it proves indeed, from the first moment when the puffing slip of a steamer that has brought you from Naples or Sorrento drops anchor in the shadow of the jagged cliffs, and you look down over the rail at the flotilla of gaily painted rowboats gathered round. There are grumblers who object to the inconvenience involved in the

Into the Golden Age

transfer of themselves and their luggage to these small craft, and say hard things of the municipal government for not building out a substantial pier at which passengers could be landed direct from the steamer; but the dreamer treats such murmurs with the contempt they deserve. Not for many piers nor any amount of convenience would he exchange the joys of that brief row on the "summer sea," with a summer sky overhead, and the sound of mandolin music in his ears, and the gleam of sunlight on the houses of the *marina* as his boat draws near the shore. Of course these joys can all be dampened by a downpour of rain; but if you have

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never experienced rain yourself at Capri, you find it difficult to sympathize with the woes of those who have—or indeed to conceive of such a moist condition existing at all.

The uniqueness of disembarkation at the island is sustained even when you finally step ashore. Instead of blue-bloused porters to take your baggage, a group of women are in waiting who swing heavy bags onto their heads and attack the trunks with Amazonian ease. At the end of the landing-stage are the carriages, mostly like victorias that have been folded together and never fully opened out again, whose sturdy ponies wear tufts of long feathers on their

Into the Golden Age

head-pieces and make a great jingling with the bells of their harness. You pack yourself into one of these equipages and are driven away—up the long white road, past jealously guarded villas and fragrant orchards, to the little town nestling between the hills. Here are most of the hotels, of varying degrees of excellence, some with gardens and some without, but almost all commanding views that would glorify a mud hut. Our windows looked out over a stretch of emerald garden to the turquoise of the sea, from which rose on the left the pointed mass of the Faraglioni Rocks—warm brown under the sunlight, deepening into purple

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when the evening shadows fell, ghostly and mysterious in the pallor of moonlight. With such pictures to feast the eyes and imagination, what matters the primitiveness of your room-furnishings or the faintness of the light emitted at night from your solitary candle?

The “trippers”—as true Capriotes scornfully term those personally-conducted ones who see Capri “between boats”—spend the major part of their time in the Blue Grotto. Doubtless one should not miss this wonder of the island; and indeed it is pleasant enough to row around from the Marina Grande, close under the rocky cliffs whose crests are touched with verdure and whose

Into the Golden Age

water-washed feet are bestrewn with the clustering red flowers of the coral. The sea is marvelously translucent here, full of changing color and of strange life; but the entrance into the Grotto itself is calculated to try even a courageous spirit, and enjoyment of the experiences within is apt to be sadly marred by doubts as to the possibility of getting out again afterwards. Taken altogether, I think the expedition comes to stand rather in the light of a duty to the sojourner on the island. Far pleasanter is it to walk or drive on terra firma—up to Anacapri, perhaps, past the Madonna who from her niche of rock seems to shed perpetual benedic-

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tion alike on the peasant girl who drops the burden from her head while she murmurs a prayer, on the youth whistling at the heels of his patient donkey, or the *forestieri* glancing carelessly into their Baedekers.

Or perhaps you choose to climb the steep path that leads to the legendary cliff of Tiberius and the ruins of his villa. It is a very steep path indeed, in places, and the sun beats down hotly; but there is no lack of diversion to shorten the way. The views are exquisite—orchards and green slopes and white villas, with glimpses of the sea all around—and then, the *tarantella* dancers! There are at least three de-

Into the Golden Age

tachments of these, who waylay you at different stages, and abuse each other with amazing fluency and picturesqueness of language. We chose the middle group, partly because the waylaying girl was so classically lovely and partly because our sympathy was aroused by the difficulties of her position. All the *forestieri*, she explained, either paused at the first station or waited till they reached the last one, where was "la Carolina"—evidently a popular favorite.

"The Signorina perceives this is very discouraging for us; and moreover the old woman down there"—pointing to an ancient crone from whose clutches

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we had with difficulty escaped a few moments earlier—"she has her mouth filled with evil lies concerning us, a bad Easter to her."

We signified our intention of ignoring the "evil lies," and allowed ourselves straightway to be led by our vindictive little beauty into the bare, white-washed room of a low cabin. She drew forward a couple of chairs, took down her castanets from their hook on the wall, and called her companion. An older woman, perhaps the mother, furnished the music—a tambourine shaken rhythmically—and in an instant the two girls were in the full swing of that wonderful dance of the South, born of sun-

Into the Golden Age

light and mirth and the memories of an olden day when Gods mixed with mortals in sweet familiarity.

Beyond the tarantella stations, higher even than the last of the “authentic” spots whence Tiberian victims were hurled, stands a little hermitage. Here you may write your name in the Visitors’ Book, or, more profitably, linger by the statue of the Madonna and look across the wonderful blue water to Sorrento in its cliff niche; and behind you over the island, with its scattered villas bowered in green and its little town dropped between the two elevations of Anacapri and the Capo di Tiberio, where you stand.

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But the quintessence of charm at Capri is in the villa life. Quite a little colony of delightful people—English, Americans, and Italians, artists and dreamers—spend a good part of the year there, in homes that convert one to a belief in fairy-tale wonders. I shall never forget a breakfast that took place within the hospitable precincts of one of these homes—a dazzling white gem of a villa that is nested on the hill half-way between the town and the Marina Grande, and whose Saracenic tower commands one of the fairest views in all the world's breadth. The gateway gives on the main road. Entering, you descend a short flight of



A dazzling white gem of a villa . . .

Into the Golden Age

stone steps into a little garden where slender iris grows and a tiny fountain murmurs its song of ancient legend. Thence you pass into the house itself under a mosaic plaque of many-tinted marbles, bits of precious *africano* and *cipellino* and *verde antico* found on the place—for you cannot turn up an inch of soil at Capri without coming upon some such ghosts of Roman magnificence. We breakfasted out on a brick-floored terrace, with a glowing portière hung at one end to keep off draughts, and flowers ablaze on the table. In front of us a pear-tree leaned over, making a snowy tracery against the molten turquoise of the sky; below

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was the *marina*, washed by the waters of the turquoise Bay; off to the right rose the rounded mass of lo Capo, with between us and it many a patch of white that told of more fruit-trees in blossom. A little bird was singing overhead; the March air was as balmy as that of June.

Nor was the breakfast itself unworthy of its setting. It was all Italian, from the tiny oysters baked in their opalescent shells to the *finocchio* (cultivated fennel) we ate raw with our crackers and cheese. Later we were taken into the kitchen where the feast had been prepared and met its presiding genius, who with native Italian courtesy made us smilingly free of his

Into the Golden Age

domain. The white-tiled oven with its sparse holes, the shining copper vessels hanging on the immaculate walls, might all have been part of a Roman villa of the old days, such a villa, perhaps, as that dreamful “White Nights” which Pater’s genius makes into so finely significant a background for the boyhood of his Marius.

It would be an endless tale, were one to attempt the telling of all that may be done with the golden days at Capri. There is the magnificent walk built by Krupp, the famous German gun-maker, which will take you down—looping along the cliffs—to the *Piccola Marina*, where you can have a car-

Italian Vignettes

riage meet and bring you back to your starting-point by way of a long circuit over the island. Perhaps you will be as fortunate in your driver as we were, and so get a glimpse of a peasant interior; for Carmine took us to his own house, of which he is justly proud. He built it largely through the assistance of two American ladies who live on the island and play the pretty part of providence to not a few of the inhabitants, and it is a model of neatness and comfort. We sat in the main room and drank some of the wine made from Carmine's own grapes, while his children—little velvet-eyed tots—danced the tarantella for us after an adorable

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baby fashion of their own, and then filled our hands with flowers—dark, fragrant violets, and the delicate pink cyclamen you see everywhere studding the grass.

Then, you can climb up to the broad plateau where frowns the gray ruin of Barbarossa's Castle, and look across to Naples in its rocky crescent with Vesuvius at one tip. From Vesuvius, indeed, you seldom get away, wherever your steps may chance to lead you. The great fire-mountain seems the tutelary spirit of all the region around; even when it is mist-shrouded from the eyes of your body, you are none the less subtly conscious of its

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presence. Mr. Henry Coleman, the artist who came to Capri to spend thirty days and has remained thirty years, has a pastel series that he calls "Songs of Vesuvius" and that show it in many moods and under many conditions—in the flush of summer dawns, hooded in winter snows, dim in the calm starlight.

It is interesting, also, to wander through the town itself; to climb the steep narrow steps that oftentimes form the streets; to watch the tailors making up suits of the white homespun that is woven from the wool of the Capri sheep. A dress costs from seven to nine dollars, and is evolved by the simple process of pinning yards of the stuff

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about the purchaser and then cutting it to the necessary shape.

There is very little begging in Capri, and—according to the boast of the inhabitants—no crime.

“If it becomes known that a certain one has done wrong,” Carmine told us, “the *Sindaco* (Mayor) at once sends him away from the island—over to Naples, where the folk are already evil.”

Moreover, in all the volcanic upheavals that have gone on for centuries all around, Capri has remained unshaken and secure. An isle of dreams in very truth, an isle of the Golden Age! And when you have left it, and come

Italian Vignettes

back into the world of rapid transit, of electricity and commerce, it is restful just to remember, now and again, that over there under the luminous Italian sky, kissed by the waves of “the tideless summer sea,” there *is* such a Land of Heart’s Desire,

“Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.”

IV

IMPRESSIONS IN ROME

IMPRESSIONS IN ROME

IT is Marion Crawford, I think, who says that it takes twenty years to know Rome superficially. In the sense in which he meant it, this is indubitably true; but happily for those of us to whom destiny denies such length of time, it is also true that in as many days he who will can learn much of the wondrous charm that haunts the Eternal City. Only, he must first have made a conscientious attempt to comply with the demands of his Baedeker, and so feel free to let his steps and his imagination stray whither they will.

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Personally, I have never found the majority of the churches in Rome sympathetic. The exteriors, indeed, are often picturesquely charming, with their yellow façades standing out against the molten turquoise of the sky, and tufts of grass and flowers growing in their every crack and crevice; but the interiors are too apt to be modernized into a cold insignificance. Nevertheless, my rule has its proving exception, for nowhere in the city do I love more to linger than in the little Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Standing on a spur of the Capitoline Hill, it presents a rough and unfinished front to the gaze of anyone who as-

Impressions in Rome

cends the long flight of stairs leading to its main entrance—stairs at the foot of which, says tradition, the Tribune Rienzi was murdered by the people whom he had once dreamed of recreating and making free. Stories of all kinds cluster about the ancient stones of the building. The name *Aracoeli* (Altar of Heaven) is commonly supposed to be derived from a revelation vouchsafed to the Emperor Octavius; but I like better the version I once heard from a Catholic prelate who had lived long in Rome. According to him, *Ara* is a corruption of the Latin *Arx* (citadel), and the designation commemorates the penetration of Christian-

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ity here into the very heart and fortress of the old Roman civilization.

It is well to visit Santa Maria in Aracoeli in the late afternoon, when the sun filters a little golden radiance through the high windows into the velvet dusk of the interior, and reveals its quaint combination of Christian and pagan features—the dissimilar antique columns taken at random from classic ruins, the sheen on rich bits of pavement, the Pinturiechio frescoes in one of the chapels. No more delightful pages from Fourteenth Century life are to be found in all Rome than these latter, which depict certain scenes from the life of San Bernardino of Siena.

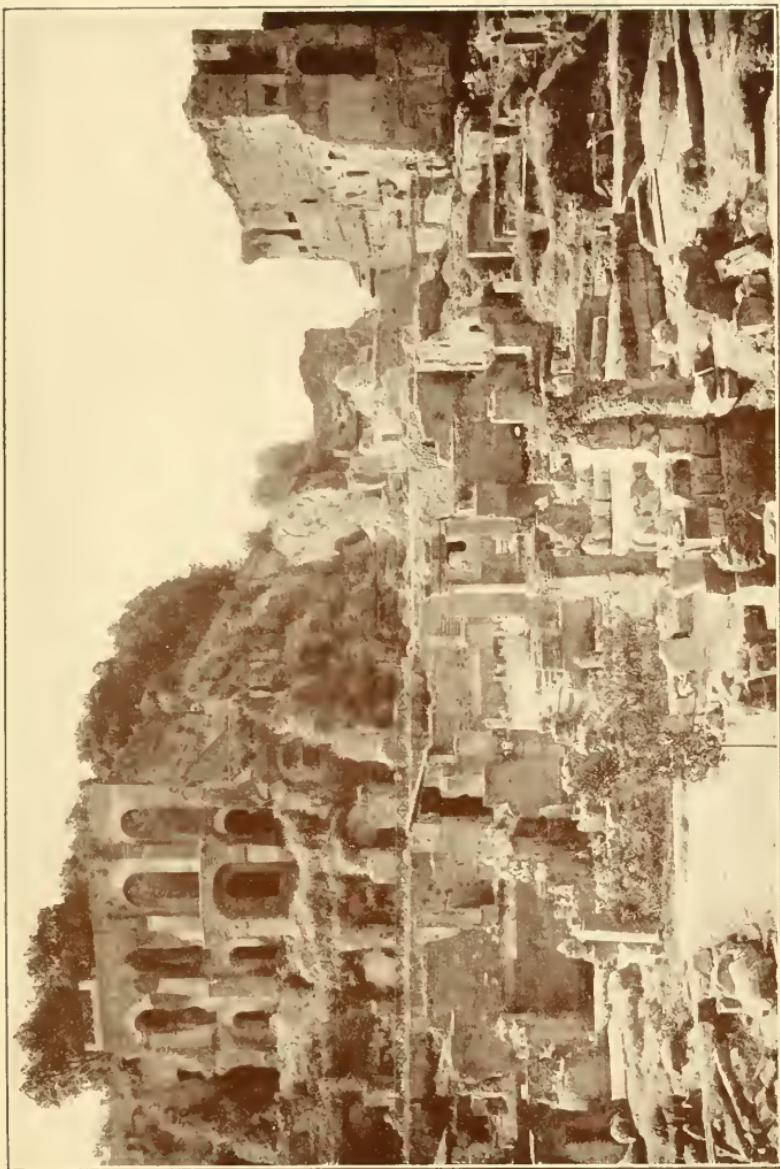
Impressions in Rome

The section showing the burial of the Saint, especially, is a very gallery of mediæval figures—mourning monks, gay young pages, stately women, richly clad men. And looking at the lordly indifference which the artist has given to the great noble—striding along preceded by his page, and with scarcely a glance for the humble figure on the bier,—looking at the sorrow of the faithful few and the careless curiosity in the expression of most of the spectators, you look deep down into the heart of that departed age—the same age to which belong those worn figures in knightly gown and cap which are carved on the slabs beneath your feet.

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It is a good place to muse over the ashes of forgotten things, here where Gibbon is said first to have conceived the plan of tracing Rome's decay and dissolution. Then, when the dimness grows too chill and you are ready to come into the stir of life again, turn, not to the main portal, but to the little door half hidden at one side of the church; and when the leatheren curtain has fallen behind you, pause a moment there at the head of the narrow yellow steps where beggars sit basking in the sun—and look out, over the ruins of the Forum and the “solitudes of the Campagna,” to the immutable blue mountains beyond.

Looks out over the ruins of the Forum . . .



Impressions in Rome

Another place which has a charm of atmosphere quite distinct from the consideration of any concrete treasures it may contain, is the Vatican. The vast irregular mass of buildings, homely enough from the exterior, turns into an enchanted palace for one who comes often and lingers lovingly. After you have marvelled over the dramatic force of the Laocoön and rejoiced in the glorious youthfulness of the Belvedere Apollo, after the frescoes of Raphael have spoken to your imagination and your eyes have grown familiar with the Titan shapes of the Sistine Chapel—then, you will become aware that the fascination of the whole, the ensemble

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of which these are but parts, has the while been creeping over your spirit. You will find yourself fallen irrevocably under the spell of these quiet galleries with their rows of still, white denizens, and here and there a dash of color where one of the gorgeously mediæval Swiss Guards stands warming himself over a brazier of burning charcoal; the spell of these rooms, whose walls are living with soft colors and whose windows look out on some forgotten court with murmurous fountain and grass-grown stones.

I remember once, while I was waiting for admission to the Borgia Apartments, wandering into a particularly

Quiet galleries with their rows of still, white denizens . . .



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long, cold corridor. It was quite deserted, for there was nothing to attract visitors unless it were some savant come to read the Latin inscriptions with which the walls were lined; but the deep embrasures of the windows framed the most exquisite pictures—distant glimpses of the city, and close at hand a fortress-like round tower and the beginning of the wall which masks the secret passage leading to the Castel Sant' Angelo. It was through this passage that the Popes were wont to escape whenever they felt themselves no longer safe in the Vatican. How far away those old days of tumult seem to one who

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looks out at the wild flowers clinging along the brown ridge of wall! And no less remote, in this strange city within a city, is the busy life of the present. Those lines of Keats,

“Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou fosterchild of Silence and slow Time,”

might be inscribed over the doors of the Vatican. Better than any other words I know do they express its essential charm—the charm of things old and remote, yet ever new in beauty and significance.

For quite different reasons, the approach to the Vatican is almost as delightful as the palace itself. Crossing

Impressions in Rome

the “blond Tiber” by the Bridge of Sant’ Angelo and passing under the crenellated walls of the great tomb-fortress itself, you come to the two streets of the Borgo Vecchio and the Borgo Nuovo. It is well to elect the latter, because then you will be spared the sight and sound of the anachronistic tram. There is no hour of the day, I think, when the sun really shines into the Borgo save at high noon—and even then his beams have somewhat of melancholy in them, as though they felt quite out of place and ill at ease. The two sides of the narrow street are lined with tiny shops and forbidding palaces—like gaunt gray wolves, these latter,

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defending the Papal City against the invasions of modern progress. The shops are generally entirely open as to their fronts, and some of them have strings of onions and red peppers festooned artistically about the walls, while others show glimpses of dim bronzes and faded brocades. Those of the latter type predominate, for the Borgo is a famous place for dealers in antiquities. In a dusky space about six feet square you will find the strangest conglomeration of articles—carved stone bowls that look as though they might have belonged to the age of Augustus, and quaintly shaped bits of silver which have very palpably been

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manufactured in that of Victor Emanuel III. And occasionally, glancing about, your eyes will be gladdened by a wonderful depth of color or purity of line in some piece of majolica or capo-di-monte perhaps lying neglected under a gray coating of dust. To bargain with the owner of these things is a thrilling and educative process, the fascination of which grows upon you. And then to come out afterwards and walk the length of the street, flattening yourself against the walls to escape passing teams, till you emerge at last in the great openness and light of the Piazza of St. Peter's—passing so from night into a blaze of noontide! No

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matter how familiar you are with the sight, it comes each time with fresh effectiveness. The vastness of the paved space, the central obelisk, the twin fountains with wind-driven spray, the church at the back with Bernini's colonnades spreading out on either side like enfolding arms—these constitute an impression of which it is impossible to weary. On a hot day it is a blinding study in yellow, and you are glad to escape into the shadow of the colonnades and grateful for the cool sound of the water as it ripples over the edge of the basins onto the pavement. At night, it is a poet's dream in ivory and silver; but perhaps at no time is it more

Impressions in Rome

impressive than as I saw it once after a great church function in Holy Week, when it was literally overswept by a surging black wave of people. There had been rain during the afternoon; the fountains looked blurred and misty; and in the twilight grayness the proportions of the whole assumed a magnitude that had in it something weird and unearthly.

Of late years, Rome has been infected with a mania for things Anglican, and afternoon tea has become a well-established institution. There is scarcely a hotel whose parlor or winter-garden does not exhibit, about four o'clock, a mushroom growth of daintily

Italian Vignettes

appointed tables. But the true seeker after impressions does not go to the hotels for tea. Indeed, if he be wise he will not even stop at one of the restaurants on the Corso—entertaining as it is to sit out on the pavement in front of one of these and see all Rome and the strangers within her gates pass by. Instead, if the day be fair, he will drive up to a certain *trattoria* on the Aventine that goes by the imposing title of Castel Costantino. Here is a long terrace, the view from which far more than compensates for the medicinal flavor of the beverages offered as refreshment, and the thickness of the cups in which these are served. Oppo-

Impressions in Rome

site is the green Palatine, and should the season be spring it presents a luminous vision in the burning sunlight and beneath the unclouded sky. The warm tones of brick arches and the white gleam of fallen columns blend with the grass and shrubbery—reminders of a dead past which is clasped in the arms of a living and ever-renewing nature. Perhaps a party of German seminarians come out on one of the spurs, and their scarlet gowns add a touch of vivid relief to the whole; while far off, there is always the misty line of the mountains which enclose the Campagna.

The Campagna!—no visit to Rome is worthy the name unless the visitor

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learns to know and appreciate this strange tract of land, untilled, fever-haunted, yet full of a weird and individual enchantment. I have driven into it on breathless days when thunder was in the air, and the distant crests of the Albine and Sabine hills stood out with that peculiar distinctness which presages a storm, and the clouds were massed overhead as though by the hand of a Michelangelo. I have been there on sunny mornings when a meet was in progress and the road was encumbered with carriages and automobiles—automobiles in the Campagna!—and the uneven ground was dotted with the pink coats of the huntsmen; and I

Impressions in Rome

have been there on slumberous afternoons when the only signs of life were the flocks of grazing sheep. The atmosphere is always the same. The monotonous lines of the aqueducts, the tombs of the Appian Way, the sparse cypress-trees, the grassy hillocks,—all alike are steeped in an unfathomable and melancholy mystery. “Here sleeps the goddess Rome,” says an Italian poet; and it seems indeed as if from this ruin and desolation there went up perpetual incense to some mighty spirit of the past.

These are a few of the impressions which may be gleaned in Rome. They are only a few, because if it takes

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twenty years to know “the Lady of the Centuries” superficially, it would need twenty times twenty years to exhaust the delights she offers. Each new day lived with her brings new revelations, till you grow to feel that there is no stone or clod which has not its part in the spell she weaves. At first perhaps you are troubled by the new Rome that has grown up on the skeleton of the old; you feel aggrieved by the presence of anything which cannot be dated back to the Middle Ages at least. But this feeling wears away. Go up on the Janiculum where stands the great bronze statue of Garibaldi as a sort of embodiment of the United Italy of our



The great bronze statue of Garibaldi . . .

Impressions in Rome

day. There is a noble dignity and force in that figure; and the attitude, as he sits his horse so steadfastly, looking down upon the Vatican, lends eloquence to the simple words engraved on the pedestal: “Roma o Morte.”*

Some idea of the long agony which was the price paid for the achievement of Rome comes to you if you will drive on a little farther, out through the Porta San Pancrazio to the Vascello—a half ruinous building which takes its name from its resemblance to the hull of a vessel. It was here that for two months, during the brief life of the republic in 1849, the Italians under Gari-

* “Rome or Death.”

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baldi held out against the besieging French troops. The stone walls are all scarred and chipped by cannon-balls; and somehow, reading the stirring inscription which commemorates those who fought and died for the ideal of liberty, that heroic defense "without hope of victory" becomes very appealing. You are glad that Rome has shown herself not unmindful, now in her freedom, of the struggles of those darker days; and you begin also to understand that those pages in her history are not the least in interest because the newest. After all, this is one secret of her perennial charm—this power she has of transmuting every-

Impressions in Rome

thing with which she is concerned “into something rich and rare.” The Rome of the Cæsars, the Rome of the Popes, the Rome of the Risorgimento, has each its own significance; they overlie and jostle one another, but for the “seeing eye” they are blended under all outward contrasts in a profound and eternal harmony.

V

THE CAMPO DEI FIORI

THE CAMPO DEI FIORI

THREE is in Rome a little square, lying south of the busy Corso Vittorio Emanuele, which every Wednesday morning wakens from its usual state of sleepy desertion into a turbulent and clamorous activity. Booths spring up mushroomlike, picturesque peasants and vendors of antiquities from the Borgo throng the place with their merchandise, and the astonished tourist who penetrates to the center of this weekly market finds temptingly displayed before his eyes every object

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for which he could conceivably have any need, from a suit of second-hand clothes to a ring warranted to be at least three centuries old. The Campo dei Fiori, or Field of Flowers, the Romans have christened the spot; but the less poetic English residents of the Eternal City, who make of it a favorite hunting-ground for antiques, are accustomed to designate it as the scene of “the Rag Fair.”

Call it by whichever name you will, it presents a bright and animated sight on a clear Wednesday morning, when the sky overhead is luminously blue, and the sun glints on strangely shaped bronze utensils and picks out the gold

The Campo dei Fiori

and silver threads of rich brocades, and the breeze rustles delicate laces and sets the heads of gay flowers a-nodding. On one side of the square congregate the vendors of bronze and stone ware, of lamps and old jewelry. A few planks set across rude supports, with perhaps an upright beam at each of the four corners, form their booths. The small articles—rings, bracelets, brooches, and such knick-knacks—are laid out on the boards, while from the corner-sticks dangle lamps, bowls, and other larger pieces. On the other side of the narrow passage that cuts the square in half and is left clear for a seemingly endless procession of car-

Italian Vignettes

riages and carts, you may find the dealers in brocades, laces, old clothing and notions. And everywhere, clustered about the booths and packing the narrow spaces between, is a moving, gesticulating, chattering crowd of men, women, and children, of natives and *forestieri*.

I have known of real “finds” made by discriminating buyers at the Field of Flowers; and indeed you may almost always pick some odd or dainty souvenir out of the heterogeneous display, if you are but armed with the requisite amount of patience and Italian. For instance, your fancy is taken with a quaintly shaped church lamp, perhaps,

The Campo dei Fiori

or a bit of brocade whose colors have been toned by time to a soft harmony. You approach the booth whereon it is displayed with an elaborately prepared expression of detached carelessness, which does not deceive the alert vendor, who is instantly at your elbow.

“How then may the Excellency be served this morning? Some lace?—marvelous lace, bought from a most ancient and noble family. Brocades?—will the Excellency so far trouble herself as to look upon this brocade in the sunlight?”

The Excellency looks, with unmoved countenance; asks the price of half a dozen articles; and comes finally to the

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lamp over which her soul secretly yearns.

“That lamp? Ah, it is to be seen that the Excellency has the art soul; there is not another lamp like it in the Campo, for beauty and chastity of design. And antiquity—ma! (A shrug, indicative of the æons of history represented by the article in question and quite inexpressible in mere words). The price?—a trifle, a nothingness, Excellency. Fifty francs.”

Here you start back with a look of amazed incredulity. “Fifty francs? *Ma che!* The lamp is not worth the half, the quarter of that sum; you have seen hundreds much finer”—et cætera,

The Campo dei Fiori

et cætera. The dealer protests that is impossible; swears by all the saints the lamp cost him fifty francs; addresses you in melting tones as “*figlia mia*” (daughter mine); gesticulates; swings the lamp seductively under your eyes. You oppose a stony front to his flood of rhetoric, and make as if you would turn away. He follows you; seizes you by the arm.

“Let the Excellency then name the just price! What will the Excellency give?”

The Excellency might perhaps be induced to give fifteen francs. The outraged proprietor falls back with a sardonic laugh.

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“ Fifteen francs? For such a lamp, of such an antiquity, of such a beauty-fulness? *Figlia mia*, it is impossible, it is a madness!”

Then he subsides into pathos. The lamp cost him more, much more than what you offer. He is a poor man; is it then to utter destitution you would reduce him? But the times are bad, very bad; and for the sake of making an affair—the Excellency may have it for forty-five francs, *ecco!* “ Impossible,” you reiterate, “ such a price is out of all reason; why not make a little combination, say twenty francs?” More protests, more references to the depth of ruin to which you would re-

The Campo dei Fiori

duce his already poverty-stricken family.

“And an Excellency, too, who speaks so well the Italian! Giovanni,”—this to his partner in trade—“is it not true that she speaks superlatively, like an Italian, the Excellency?”

Unsoftened even by such a tribute,—hopefully brought out by your vendor as his trump card—you shake your head; and the price of the lamp finally drops five francs. This process is repeated until you are within one franc of the sum set as your ultimatum—and over that single franc you spend as much time and as many arguments as over the whole preceding twenty-nine.

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The vendor works himself into a passion of dramatic eloquence; calls on the Madonna to be a witness of your cruelty; appeals to your justice, to your charity. At length, however, if you succeed in preserving that “quiet and unexcited demeanor” recommended by Baedeker for such occasions, and have sufficient self-command to turn your back and stroll away, you will in all probability find yourself pursued and the lamp thrust into your hands.

“*Ecco!* it is here! I give it, that I may have the honor of the Excellency’s friendship.”

You eagerly grasp the coveted article and pay the twenty francs; and the

The Campo dei Fiori

individual who five minutes earlier was near to cursing your name, blandly pulls out his card, entreats you to visit his shop in the Borgo—where it will be his happiness to show you other things of a rarity and charm unexampled,—and bids you as exquisitely affable a “*buon giorno*” as if you had just presented him with a fortune. And so you pass on to the next stall, to repeat identically the same comedy.

It is characteristic of the Rag Fair that everything sold there is antique—or said to be. Even the ragged urchin who pursues you with papers of safety-pins, lifts his big brown eyes to your face and humorously murmurs “molto

Italian Vignettes

antico, signora" (very antique, lady), as he exhibits his wares. Only the flowers are exempt from the general rule. They were plucked at dawn, you are told; and the deep purple violets and graceful frisia, the mignonette and the many-tinted anemones, make a radiant springtime around the worn bronze statue of Giordano Bruno, monk and philosopher, who was burned here as a heretic in the Sixteenth Century—for it was in this square, so full now of bustle and brightness, that the faggots used to be piled in the grim days of the Inquisition.

Such contrasts of past and present, of tragedy and continuing life, are part

The Campo dei Fiori

of the breath of Rome; and you ponder them as you make your way out of the press in the Piazza, the shrill voices of the hawkers in your ears, and clasped tightly in your arms the precious packages—generally done up in dirty newspaper—which you have acquired through the exercise of so much patient diplomacy. You can hardly wait until you get back to your rooms to examine them; and if this has been your initial introduction to the Campo dei Fiori, your soul is probably uplifted within you by the extraordinary bargains you conceive yourself to have made, whereas if you are an old habitué, you reflect sadly that in all human

Italian Vignettes

probabilities the article for which you paid twenty francs could, with only a little more effort on your part, have been gotten quite as well for ten.

VI

AN AUDIENCE AT THE
VATICAN

A N A U D I E N C E A T T H E
V A T I C A N

IT is not so difficult now to secure an audience at the Vatican as it was during the closing years of Leo XIII's pontificate. Pius X is stronger than his predecessor and is besides especially interested in Americans, so that a letter of introduction to Monsignor Kennedy, Rector of the American College at Rome, or some personal acquaintance with an ecclesiastic, generally suffices to secure the square of white paper bearing the Papal arms and set-

Italian Vignettes

ting forth the day and hour on which you will be admitted to see the Holy Father.

If you have never been inside the Vatican save as a tourist, that bit of paper assumes a certain solemn grandeur in your eyes. It means admission to those private apartments that are not in Baedeker, an approach to what a large part of civilization holds to be the inmost heart of the Christian world. We, at any rate, experienced distinct anticipatory thrills when the appointed moment arrived, and gowned in decorous black, with black lace veils on our heads, we found ourselves rattling over the Bridge of Sant' Angelo and

An Audience at the Vatican

through the narrow Borgo Vecchio to draw up under Bernini's Colonnade at the Portone di Bronzo (Great Bronze Doors), the main entrance to the Vatican Palace. We were in a plebeian hired vehicle—otherwise we should have been permitted to drive around to the back of St. Peter's and into the Cortile San Damaso, one of the twenty-one courts scattered through the vast pile.

From the Portone, you pass up a succession of stairways—with gorgeous red and yellow Swiss Guards stationed, halberd in hand, on every landing—to a spacious frescoed room, where you are allowed to pause a moment and recover the breath you have probably lost

Italian Vignettes

during your climb. Then an imposing lacquey clad in magenta brocade-velvet, with powdered hair, knee-breeches, and buckled shoes, requests you to "have the gentility" to follow him, and leads you on to the room designated for the audience. A few seats are ranged along the wall,—straight, high-backed chairs of dark wood—and if you have been wise and are a little early, you may sink down on one of these and absorb the scene about you—the lofty room hung with mellow-tinted tapes-tries and magenta brocade that matches the lacqueys' coats; the single table with its crucifix; the two tall windows, whose white silk hangings are faintly stirred

An Audience at the Vatican

by a breeze that seems to whisper of the Rome lying without, the Rome of St. Peter—and of Garibaldi. Yes, it almost seems as if even here, to this inner fortress of the Leonine City, there pierced an eagle glance from the eyes of that bronze figure who sits his horse on the crest of the Janiculum, gazing eternally down at the dwelling of the Pontiff whose temporal power he helped to shatter.

Meanwhile, there is a constant soft rustling going on about the door of the apartment in which you are waiting. A Noble Guard, in the charming uniform which Mrs. Humphrey Ward describes as that of “half dandy and half

Italian Vignettes

god," passes through; or a purple-clad ecclesiastic; or Monsignor Bisleti, "Master of the Chamber to His Holiness," in charge of a party of distinguished foreigners. The men all wear evening dress; the women must appear in black, with veils, but there is no embargo placed on the wearing of jewels, and the great ladies of the Black, or Church Party, when they attend a presentation fairly blaze with diamonds.

A little bell, striking clear and sharp, though apparently at some distance, is the first warning you receive of the Pope's coming. Then a Noble Guard appears in the doorway; faces the room

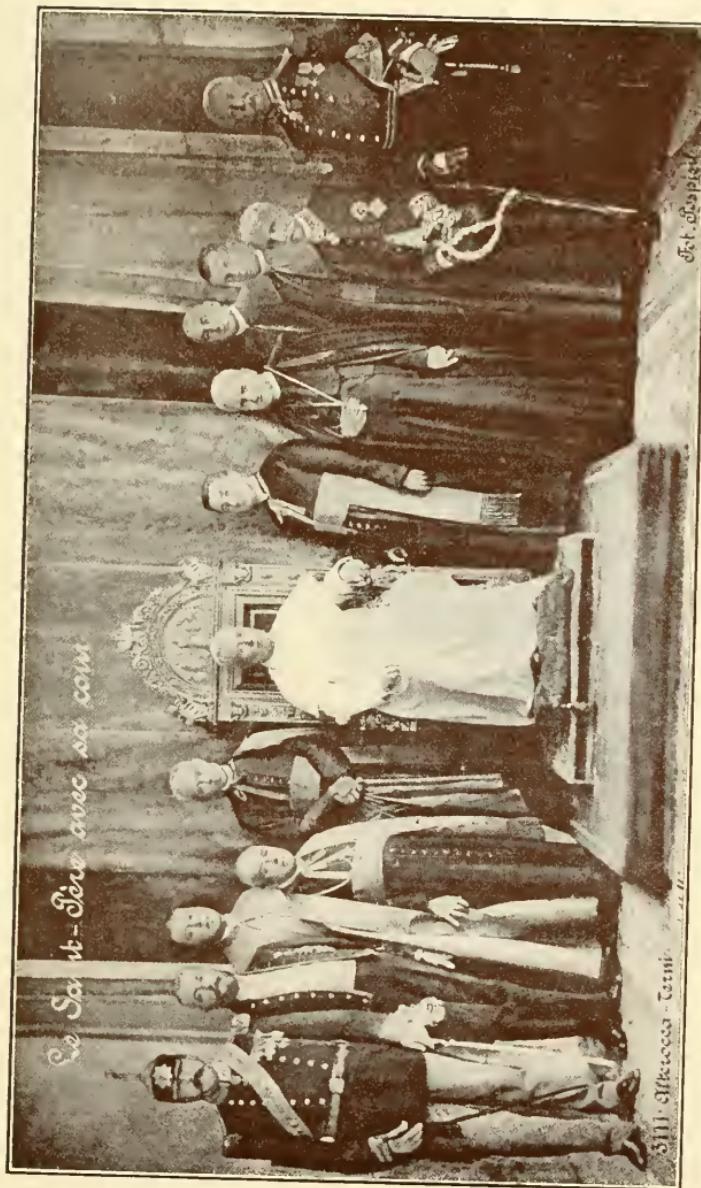
An Audience at the Vatican

for a tense instant; turns, and with his hand at salute drops on one knee. It is the signal. The people, who have risen, forming a semi-circle, sink like reeds swept by the wind; and where the Guard had stood, stands a white-robed figure, with two priestly attendants dimly discernible in the shadow beyond. Very simply, with a smile that is in itself a benediction, the Pope makes the round of the room, holding out his hand to each person to receive a kiss on the great amethyst that glows darkly on his third finger. At the farther door he turns, one hand upraised, and gives the Apostolic Benediction.

The whole impression that remains

Italian Vignettes

from the simple ceremony is one of extraordinary spiritual significance. Protestant or Catholic, in the moment when you see against the semi-circle of dusky kneeling figures that one form so resplendently white, when you look up into the face so instinct with benignant dignity and calm loveliness, you feel the thrill of nearness to a great fundamental force. Through all the wistful sadness that looks out of the eyes of Pius X, through all the weariness as of one who bears a heavy burden, you are conscious of the *Pope*—the individuality of the man merged in the idea of which he is the human symbol.



His Holiness Pope Pius X with his Court

Saint-Pierre avec son conseil

Saint-Pierre avec son conseil

Etat d'Espagne

An Audience at the Vatican

Many devotees, when they come out from their audience, slip into St. Peter's to kiss the foot of the bronze Peter in whose place sits the Pontiff they have just saluted. Our protestantism, however, though for the moment much in abeyance, turned restive at this point, and we took our carriage where we had left it, at the bronze Portone. It was an open carriage, of course,—who that loves Rome will consent, unless urged by utmost stress of bad weather, to shut himself away from her sights?—and as we drove back to our hotel in the mellow afternoon light, many a glance was turned on our black veils, and now and again we caught a

Italian Vignettes

murmur: "Ah, sono state dal Papa, quelle." (They've been to the Pope's, those others). At the hotel door we were met by our devoted *facchino*,* Angelo, who is a patriot and a royalist, and shakes his head at the mention of the temporal power of the Papacy.

"Veda, Signorina," he remarked, "col Papa non tengo; ma non c' è da dire, questo è un vero padre pei poveri." (You see, Signorina, I don't hold with the Pope; but it's not to be denied that this one is a real father to the poor.)

A Father to the Poor!—a prouder title, is it not, than that of Papa-Re (Pope-King) for which the Church contends?

* Porter.

VII

HOLY WEEK AND EAS-
TER IN ROME

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER IN ROME

THE approach of Easter in Rome brings the climax of what the citizens graphically describe as “the invasion.” The foreigners who have been more or less in evidence through the winter multiply with a rapidity disconcerting to the lover of undiluted Italy; the galleries, so lately given over to “Silence and slow Time,” become the hunting-grounds of the personally-conducted; and English is abroad in street and shop.

As with us, each day in Holy Week

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has its special observance; but it is on Maundy Thursday that the most characteristic and interesting ceremonies take place. Then every church in Rome has one chapel set apart to represent the Holy Sepulchre, with the Host in a golden or silver urn on the altar, surrounded by lighted tapers and masses of flowers; and all through the afternoon throngs of the devout, with a fair sprinkling of the merely curious, make their way from one to the other of these consecrated spots. On one occasion, we noticed an especially dense crowd collected around the entrance to Santa Maria degli Angeli (St. Mary of the Angels), the church Michelangelo

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

made out of one of the vaulted halls of the Baths of Diocletian, and were enlightened as to its meaning by an affable street-sweeper.

“Cross quickly, *signore mie*,” he urged, “*ce la Regina Madre*.” (It is the Queen Mother—the pretty Italian equivalent for the harsher title of Dowager Queen.)

King Humbert’s widow was making the round of the churches with the other dwellers in Rome; and hurrying over, we were in time to see her as she came out, escorted by a couple of ecclesiastics. At the door they kissed her hand, and she passed on to her carriage with a gracious little bow to the people

Italian Vignettes

around. She is rather stout, and her face especially has grown too heavy for beauty; but her smile is still as charming as when “the Pearl of Savoy” first won her way into the hearts of her Italian subjects.

Of all the chapels, the loveliest is usually to be found in Santa Maria Liberatrice, the church attached to the Convent of the Perpetual Adoration. When we saw it, it was decked entirely in pure white blossoms; two nuns in the white robes of the sisterhood knelt before the altar, looking indeed—as the light from the candles fell on their veiled heads—like mystical brides of the Church; while out of the darkness

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

of the choir came the sound of a woman's voice, intoning the solemn service.

Unfortunately, it has a way of raining in torrents on Holy Thursday, and towards five o'clock in the afternoon the Bridge of Sant' Angelo and the narrow ways leading to the Piazza of St. Peter's become choked with umbrella-bearing pedestrians and carriages with their "hoods" up. You wonder, as you glance at the throng, how all these people are going to find accommodation in the basilica; and yet, when the leatheren curtain has dropped behind you, your first impression is one of a dim solitude. It is not until you

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have passed up the nave towards the Pontifical Altar that you realize that several thousands of spectators are already gathered there, with more being constantly added. Near this altar—where mass is celebrated only when the Pope is present in person—it is well to take your stand, facing the smaller altar in the apse. There twelve candles burn, to represent the Twelve Apostles; and as the gloomy office of the “Tenebræ” is intoned by the attendant priests, one after the other of these flickers out, till in the darkness only a single spark is left—that of the central candle which represents the Christ. A pause follows; then into the silence steal

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

the first notes of the Miserere, sung by the Sistine Choir—unforgettable music, with its solemn burden of bass notes and that one pure strain which now floats softly out unaccompanied, and now soars high and clear over the full chorus.

Scarcely is the singing at an end, when up to the Pontifical Altar is seen winding a long procession of Cardinals, Canons, and Acolytes. The Altar, for this occasion, is stripped of all covering and ornament, save for a couple of flasks of antique shape containing oil and wine. The contents of these are poured over the white marble; then, as the procession moves by, each Cardinal

Italian Vignettes

and Canon in turn passes over the surface the sort of long-handled mop with which he is armed. For the most part, this ceremony of "purification" is performed in an exceedingly perfunctory manner—though I do remember one or two stout Canons who showed a certain housewifely zeal in their manipulation of the mops.

We were fortunate enough to be directly on the line of retreat of the procession; and Rampolla, the *Grand Seigneur* of the Church, passed within finger's touch of us, followed by a group of lesser Cardinals, and of Canons looking oppressed enough in the gray squirrel capes that top their pur-

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

ple robes. As for the Acolytes, they seemed to be dropping on their knees all about us, as a sumptuously gowned ecclesiastic, holding aloft a jewelled reliquary, appeared upon the little loggia above the statue of St. Veronica. It is, I think, only on this day—and perhaps on Christmas—that the five special treasures of St. Peter's holy of holies are exhibited; and although it is impossible for the spectator to distinguish St. Veronica's handkerchief from the head of St. Andrew, the scene itself—the dim church, the vast dome looming overhead, the figure of the priest standing out high above the people with the light of tapers bringing gleams

Italian Vignettes

from the gold of his vestments and flashing back from the gems in the reliquaries as these are raised and lowered—the scene, decidedly, is of those which, appealing at once to the senses and to the imagination, linger richly in the memory.

The exhibition of the relics closes the Holy Thursday ceremonies at St. Peter's; and a few moments afterwards, as you stand on the steps leading down from the portico, the whole Piazza below appears to be covered with an eddying black wave of humanity. To find your carriage in the tangle is no simple matter—especially if, as in our own case, you have come in a

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

hired vehicle and then forgotten the mystic number which, shrilled forth by some sturdy street urchin, might summon your *vetturino* out of the vasty night. Our only clue lay in the color of our horse, which was a unique and unhealthy yellow; but whether we should ever have been able to pick him, unaided, out of the involved throng of variously tinted quadrupeds, is more than I dare assert. Fortunately our driver was a shrewd old fellow and instituted a search from his end; still more fortunately, our paths happened to cross; and after a few uneasy moments of ducking under the heads of horses and dodging between carriage-

Italian Vignettes

wheels, we were able to whip out of the press. The rain had stopped, and a big round moon hung high above the city as we passed over the Ponte Sant' Angelo on our homeward way.

On Good Friday darkness reigns in all the churches, and there is no music save for the Miserere sung at St. John Lateran; but Saturday brings premonitory symptoms of the morrow's joyous festival. On the Spanish Steps—haunt of flower-vendors and models—lilies and other white blossoms are banked in dazzling masses; and all day the parish priests pass busily through the streets on their way to bless the houses. We knew nothing of this cus-

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

tom, and consequently were sufficiently mystified when, late on Saturday afternoon, our favorite *facchino*, Angelo, appeared at the door of our sitting-room with the announcement:

“Signorina, c’ è il prete” (the priest is here).

A few questions brought an explanation, which Angelo was evidently somewhat scandalized to find necessary. We learned that it is the duty of the priest to visit every house in his parish on Easter Even in order to purify it for the next day and that in the hotels the manager generally has the public parlors blessed and then sends the priest through the building to the rooms of

Italian Vignettes

all those who are not averse from the performance of a similar ceremony. We promptly instructed Angelo to admit the padre, who was accordingly ushered in—a gentle-faced old man in a shabby black gown, followed by a youthful attendant bearing holy-water. The *paroco* sprinkled a few drops towards the four corners of the room and recited a Latin benediction; then with a quick “*buon giorno*” went on his way, leaving us to entertain a quite new respect for our apartment as a spot whence the sprites of malice and all uncharitableness had been at least temporarily banished.

As for Easter Day itself, who shall

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

describe that? It is not the magnificence of the Church ceremonial which is so impressive; it is the attitude of the people as a whole. The maid, when she brought us our hot water in the morning, greeted us with "buona Pasqua," (a good Easter). "Buona Pasqua," smiled the elevator-boy as he took us down; "buona Pasqua," obsequiously murmured the waiter, putting a couple of colored eggs before us at breakfast—"buona Pasqua, buona Pasqua," is the refrain throughout the day. And there is nothing formal or perfunctory about the salutation; it is quite spontaneous and from the heart. You have only to go out in the streets

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and watch the crowd that fills them—the fathers carrying babies, the mothers with half a dozen little ones clinging to their skirts, the grandmothers and great-grandmothers—to realize that in spite of the music and pomp, the sumptuously arrayed Cardinals moving in clouds of incense, the red cloth decorations and fat wax candles painted with pictures of lambs and other appropriate symbols, morning mass at St. Peter's is but a part of the day's charm. It is the spirit of joy that seems to permeate every nook and cranny and to touch every face—no matter how worn or aged or sad—with some reflection of the glory that is in the golden sunlight

Holy Week and Easter in Rome

and the wide blue sky, which brings to the traveler the feeling that Easter in Rome is indeed "good" in a quite special degree.

VIII

OLD CLOISTERS

OLD CLOISTERS

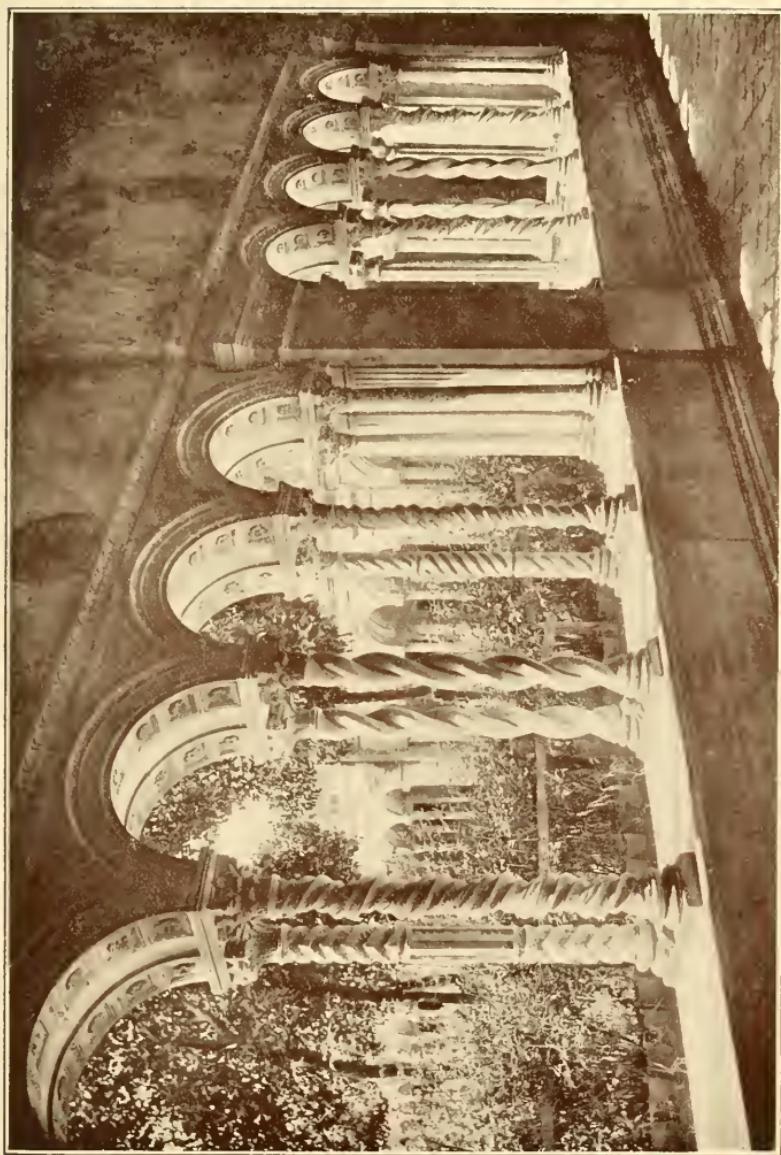
WHO has not felt the charm that clings about old buildings?—a charm born less of any tangible beauties of form and design than of subtle things of association and memory that seem to emanate from the very stones. Wandering through the deserted halls, one walks among ghosts that are more real than oneself—ghosts of the “dear dead women,” of the men and the little children who wept and laughed here, made love and parted, “all in the long ago.” Nor is this charm anywhere more compelling, I think, than in the

Italian Vignettes

cloisters of some one-time monastery whose inhabitants—scattered long since, to give place perhaps to the slow ravages of decay or perhaps to the blue-coated guardians of Government monuments—have yet left behind them, indelible while the arcades stand, the impress of their personality.

In Italy, the intimate appeal of these cloisters is the more strongly felt because of the cold formality of so many of the churches. With what a sense of relief one passes, for instance, from the magnificent but meaningless interior of the Roman San Paolo Fuori le Mura—with its newness of polished granite and its glitter of gilding—into the fra-

*One passes into the fragrant stillness and sweet antique serenity
of Il Chiostro . . .*



Old Cloisters

grant stillness and sweet antique serenity of *il chiostro* alongside! A square garden, with close-cropped turf, and neat gravelled paths, and a tangled loveliness of flowers and shrubs, bordered by wide cloisters whose arches are borne up on the most exquisite of slender columns, all twisted and carved into varying quaintnesses of design—this is what remains of the home of the Benedictine Brothers who once lived in the shadow of the church. A wonderful life it must have been, one fancies; rich in holy leisure and aspiration. How could one look out day after day, from man's fairest handiwork on God's, without striving—even unconsciously

Italian Vignettes

—to bring oneself into harmony with the beauty around? The old chroniclers tell scandalous tales enough of the wild doings that went on within monastic walls; but pacing the flagged cloister, with the scent of roses in one's nostrils and the caress of a stealing breeze on one's cheek, it is easier far, and pleasanter, to dwell on some such account as that given by Fra Filippo, a Siennese who lived in the 14th Century, of a certain prior of his acquaintance—a man who “although he had most great burdens and pain and tribulations and suffering, being indeed never free from them,” yet “never was moved to impatience, but rather was always so

Old Cloisters

placid and kindly and benign and of such good cheer, that he seemed verily to be burning with holy charity. And with every sorrow and every joy of another, did he grow sad and rejoice as though it had been his own. And the strangers who stopped at his convent were received by him with so much love and charity that it seemed they were his brothers and sons whom he had for a long time been without seeing. And never from his mouth did there issue a vain or reprehensible word."

Again in another place, Fra Filippo tells of how he came one day, with a companion, to the convent of this "blessed prior," and found him de-

Italian Vignettes

serted by all his brethren, who had fled before the rumor of an approaching band of Free Lances. Yet none the less, “when he saw us, he received us with so much joy as was an admirable thing. And in the whole place there was nothing left to eat save only two rolls, quite small, which he had kept for himself, and some wine and some leeks. And with a holy charity he obliged us to eat with him, and placed those two rolls on a table without any cloth, and the wine also and the leeks. And God knows I speak no lie when I say that never have I found myself at any feast or wedding or banquet whatsoever, when it seemed to me I ate so well and

Old Cloisters

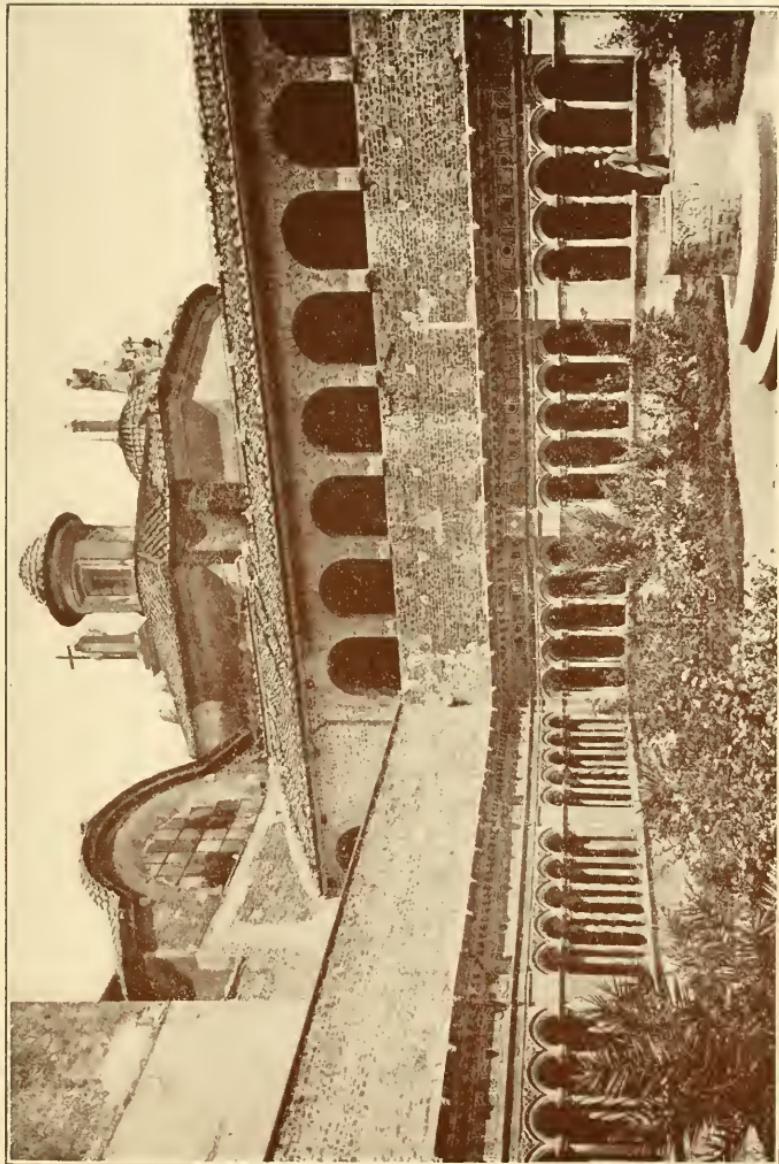
so abundantly, and took so great enjoyment in eating; and likewise did it befall my companion. For the sweetness of the words of God which were in that blessed prior's mouth, made a food above all the foods of the world." It was in the cloister, I am sure, that the frugal meal must have been spread, where the radiance of the blue sky overhead and the golden sunshine all around might well make the absence of a "cloth" unnoticeable, and give breadth and life to the "words of God" on the host's lips.

Almost equally fair a spot, and indeed of close kin in the fashioning of its arcades with their low, broad balus-

Italian Vignettes

trade and dissimilar columns, are the Cloisters of St. John Lateran. There is perhaps a more tropical note sounded in the garden here, where clumps of palms spread the wide green of their leaves; and this note is still further emphasized by the curiously carved stone well of Saracenic design which occupies the center of the court—the very well-stone, the sacristan will inform you, by which Christ met and talked with the Woman of Samaria. By what strange bypaths of destiny it found its way to the cloister of this one-time Benedictine Monastery, you are not informed; but sitting on its broad edge and gazing about you at the fair peacefulness of

Almost equally fair a spot as the cloisters of St. John Lateran . . .



Old Cloisters

the scene, that other scene, enacted so long ago in far-off Palestine, seems to come very vividly before the eyes of your imagination. Did the monks, you wonder, as they paced up and down the cloisters, let their eyes rest often on this bit of the Holy Land whose tradition it would have been sacrilege to question? And did they also call to mind the picture of the wandering Christ resting there, and the Woman with her water-jar standing beside him listening to the words which have come down the centuries as the most beautiful of all interpretations of the relation that should exist between God and man? “But the hour cometh, and now is,

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when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Somewhat later in date than that of the Lateran, but full of the same religious quietude, is the cloister-surrounded garden which Michelangelo designed for the Carthusian Monks who seized upon part of the vast ruins of Diocletian’s Baths and built them a convent among its walls. Here you look through open arches on dark cypress-trees, that tradition says were planted by the Titan hand which could bring

Old Cloisters

into being the decorations of the Sistine Chapel and yet not disdain to order the arrangements of a Carthusian court; and carpeting the grass about their feet, you see beds of hyacinth and narcissus, of pansies and violets. In the center of the garden is a tiny fountain, and put up around it as if in guardianship are strange mammoth heads of bulls and other animals. Broken columns and grotesque forms gleam here and there among the verdure; for these cloisters show an intermingling of pagan and Christian elements that makes them unconsciously typical of much which is significant in Italy's inner life. Built among the ruins of a

Italian Vignettes

Roman Emperor's Thermæ, they are now part of one of Rome's museums; and mutilated forms of nymphs and goddesses, of youths and maidens, decorate the arcade designed to be trodden by meditative, brown-clad brethren. Nor does this juxtaposition bring about any sense of discord, but rather a deeper, wider harmony of peace. These antique fragments, the more pathetically lovely for the injuries sustained during their long burial, what are they but an expression of that same yearning after the beautiful and the high which later prompted the monastic ideal? The goddesses are broken and earth-stained, the monks have gone out

Old Cloisters

forever from the home of their prayers,—but the water as it murmurs quietly in its basin, and the breeze as it passes through the grave cypress-trees, and the birds choiring in the branches, all maintain that they have had their place and value in the eternal scheme of things. Amidst such a scene, under such a wide sky of luminous turquoise, belief must meet with eagerness the poet's conviction that

“ All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of
good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty nor
good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-
vives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an
hour.”

IX

TIVOLI

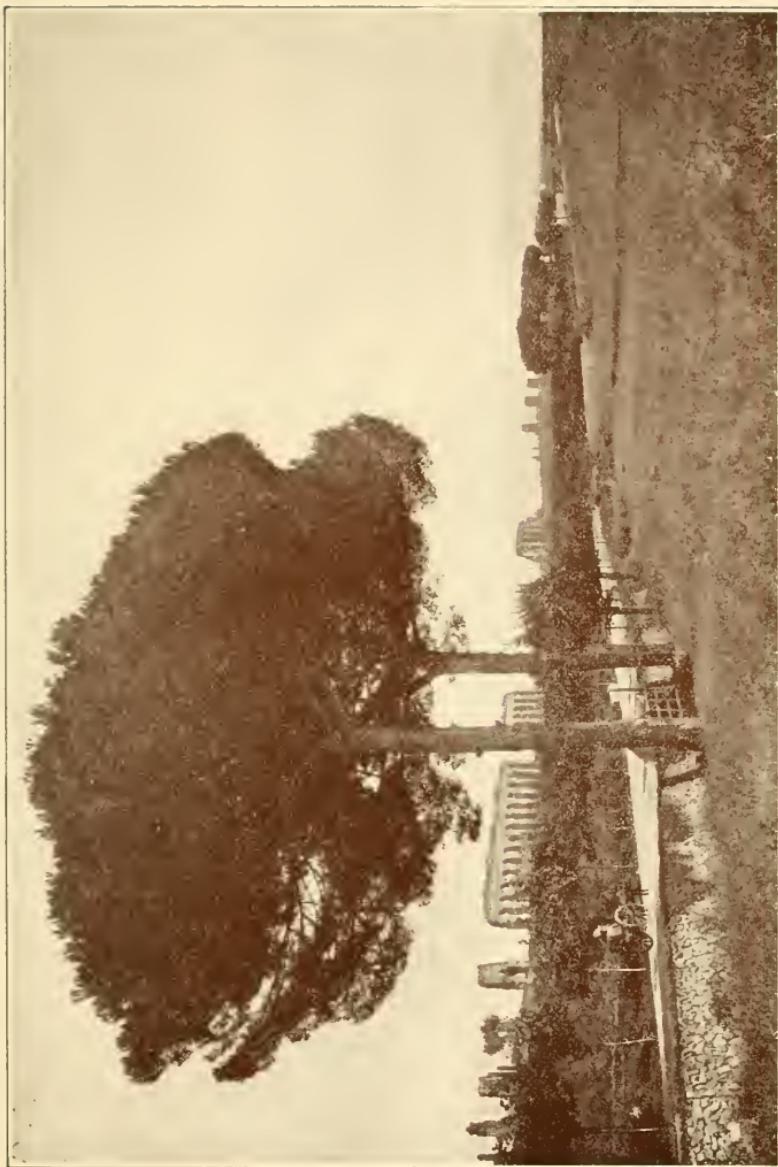
TIVOLI

A DAY at Tivoli is a symphonic poem in three parts, with the trip thither for a kind of prelude. Through the heat-stricken, haunting melancholy of the Roman Campagna, with its burden of suggestion in every note, from the gravely valiant march of the aqueducts to the broken undulations of soil that might pass for the physical expression of a buried life still obscurely but turbulently stirring, you draw near and are borne up into the cool fastnesses of those Sabine Mountains which have

Italian Vignettes

been at once the witnesses and the prolongation of the mighty legend of Rome. Here you find that Tivoli which was the Tibur of the ancients; and here—crowning a rocky spur, the time-stained marble of its columns blending into the color and sentiment of its surroundings with that intimate air of relationship which makes one of the subtlest charms of Italian ruins—stands the little circular temple ascribed by tradition to the worship of Tibur's Sibyl. Rounded fold on rounded fold, the mountains lie about it. Below is a deep gorge tapestried in varied greens of live-oak and ilex and laurel, a haunt meet, one fancies, for shy fauns hiding

Through the heat-stricken, haunting melancholy of the Roman Campagna . . .



Tivoli

in lush dells, where listening one might even hear the pipings of Pan himself as an accompaniment to the distance-softened roar of the great Fall that comes down opposite in foam-white turbulence. Nor is this the only water-note. Far away to the right, silver veinings over the rockface tell of the smaller cascades that are bringing their song, too, down to the River Anio, their song of the high mountain solitudes and the pure source where they had their birth.

It must be a world-deadened spirit indeed that can find no answering thrill wherewith to meet the appeal of such a scene.

Italian Vignettes

“ Great God ! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less for-
lorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

As you stand by the Temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli, such glimpses do come; your eyes grow keen to see, not Proteus indeed, but the vanishing form of Daphne, and your ears are quickened, not to the blowing of Triton’s horn, but to the song of the Nymph in the Falls. You realize, perhaps, as never before, the divine and eternal element in the old nature worship; the significance for us to-day, in this our complex modern life,

Tivoli

of the truth towards which the ancients were reaching when they put this temple here, this home for the Sibyl who in our present thought becomes simply as it were the concentrated voice of Nature, a medium of expression for the wisdom of those hoar senators the mountains, of the limitless light of the sky, of the whispering trees. And with what a glad further rise of the spirit towards the same truth, comes the remembrance that it was from the lips of these same Sibyls, who “were old when the world was new,” that there issued a prophecy of the coming Christ!

It is by winding ways, narrow, dark, and of ill-odor, that you pass out of the

Italian Vignettes

old Roman into the mediæval world, and thence to the portal of the Villa d'Este and the Renaissance. The transition is rapid and striking. Virgil gives place to Boccaccio, and you find yourself in a dwelling akin to that palace of the "Decamerone" with its "spacious and fair court in the midst, and with loggias and with halls and with rooms, each one in its own fashion most beautiful, and made with joyous paintings praiseworthy and ornate; and with all about it fields, and gardens wonderful to see, and with wells of freshest water."

Especially is it in these "gardens wonderful to see," that you realize the

Tivoli

contrast between the scene you have just left and that upon which you have entered. Before you, flights of stone steps go down to a pleached alley, that stretches into limitless distance under a shadow of bordering cypress-trees. The water—the very sound of which here comes as differently to your ear as do the notes of a flute from those of a violoncello—either sleeps in moss-stained marble basins played over by darting dragon-flies, or if it falls in cascades, does so over cunningly devised “effects” of rock, and is blown from Triton-shells into fern-fringed reservoirs. Quaintly clipped hedges point the way to formal bowers, and

Italian Vignettes

white forms gleam here and there in the green dusk—pathetically appealing forms of broken goddesses and time-scarred gods. It is a very Garden of Eden—but a Garden of Eden of the Renaissance. Never could it have come into being in the days before Eve tasted of the apple. Nature, of which by the Temple of the Sibyl you realized the elemental significance, has here become thoroughly sophisticated, thoroughly imbued with a self-consciousness that is as charming as the spontaneous coquetry of a pretty woman. You need not hope in straying along these exquisite alleys ever to surprise a frisk-

Tivoli

ing faun; no dryads will peep out at you from behind these oak-trees. Instead you instinctively look for figures such as throng the frescoes of Ghirlandajo and Orcagna and their fellows—figures of stately ladies with the glint of sunlight in their hair and in the rich brocade of their gowns, and with perhaps a single jewel burning on the whiteness of their low, broad foreheads; of handsome men clad, they too, in silks and furs, able to tread a measure or murmur over one of Messer Petrarca's sonnets. Peacocks belong here, too; and the little white dogs beloved of so many of the old painters; and stone tables laden with

Italian Vignettes

“ A heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups tinted with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.”

Through the tinkle of the water you hear soft laughter, with just a note of mockery in it, and the musical blending of voices; and the breeze as it steals past you seems to bear a faint, haunting, exquisite perfume of those vanished days and people. The more you linger among the shaded paths and by the voiceful fountains, the stronger becomes the hold upon your fancy of their charm, and the keener your under-

Tivoli

standing that an essential part of that charm is in its suggestion of a rich humanity underlying all the formalism, of a heart beating in the old sundial as it marks off the centuries.

It is at Hadrian's Villa, some three miles away, that you find the third part in the symphonic poem. The road, a dusty riband between bordering green, winds among the hills, past groves of gnarled, fantastic olive-trees that your driver, answering a question as to their age, will tell you have been there "since before the deluge, Signorina." If it be a spring day, and the sun is beating hotly down on a teeming earth from out the luminous blue, you are inclined

Italian Vignettes

gratefully to welcome the moment when you descend from the carriage and pass into the walk, kept cool and shadowy by its double line of stately cypress-trees, that leads to the scattered ruins of the Villa itself. Here they are—the long brick wall, the fragments of columns, the denuded arches, crumbling relics of the glory that was Rome's. This, your guide will tell you, was the Biblioteca; this the Triclinium; here a garden was laid out; there the Basilica upreared its marble pillars. You try to conceive of the whole vast pile as it must have appeared when Hadrian the Emperor took his ease in its brilliant chambers, putting aside the cares of

Tivoli

state to converse with sages in the Sala dei Filosofi; but your mind shrinks, somehow, from the reconstruction. Tacitly it seems to recognize that the inner beauty, the true appeal of the place, is not archaeological—not even, in a certain sense, historical. Standing in all its superb freshness and finish, it could not have had the significance innate now in the play of the warm lights and velvet shadows over its desolation; in the fragrance of the new-blown roses rooted amidst its hoary age; in the song of the birds nesting in its statue-emptied niches. For it has become the final chord of the great poem of nature. In the Temple of the Sibyl, there sounds a

Italian Vignettes

reminder from the days when the world was very new, when men's ears were more keen than now to catch God's utterance in the sweep of the wind through the trees, in the fall of the water over the rocks; the gardens of the Villa d'Este speak of nature moulded by man, and taking with gracious receptiveness the imprint of his personality; but in Villa Adriana, you have about man's dying work, nature's undying arms, harmonizing all that was discordant, mellowing all that was harsh and crude, turning ruin into beauty, proclaiming eternity.

X

STONES OF FLORENCE

STONES OF FLORENCE

IT has often seemed to me that there is no city in Italy which has not as it were an individual *motif*, that detaches itself against the symphonic background of the general charm. In Rome, it is pre-eminently an exquisite and soul-stirring minor cadence telling of the beauty in ruin; in Venice it is a dreamful strain of moonlight and murmuring water; while in Florence, surely,—that “most famous and most beautiful daughter of Rome”—the distinctive note is struck in the rich poetry of her mediæval buildings—buildings

Italian Vignettes

that perpetuate and interpret the forces of which they were the outgrowth. To walk over the Ponte Vecchio—the narrow Ponte Vecchio, with its tiny shops clinging barnacle-wise on either side—is to find oneself in the Sixteenth Century with Benvenuto Cellini, whose bust fitly presides over this haunt of goldsmiths. To stand in the dim Baptistry is to draw near with quickened sympathy to the mighty shade of Dante, who was never more humanly appealing than in the pathos of his references to “il mio bel San Giovanni”—symbol to him of Florence and happier days. Above all, to visit the Bargello—ancient palace of the Executor



The square, battlemented, and towered stone pile . . .

Stones of Florence

of Justice—and the Convent of San Marco—shrine of Fra Angelico's genius,—is to penetrate deep into the chivalric and the monastic spirit of the Middle Ages.

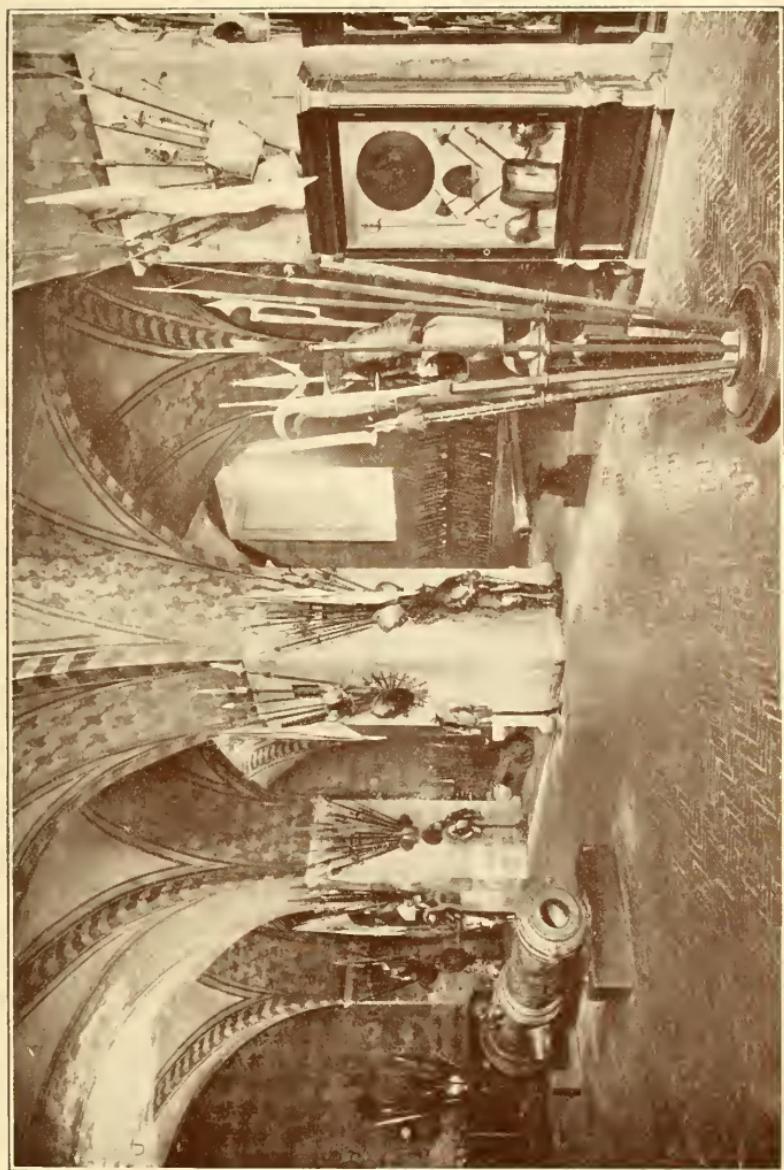
They are narrow and labyrinthine ways the visitor must follow to come at the first of these monuments—the square, battlemented and towered stone pile which was once the residence of the Podestà, later that of the Executor of Justice; and which the modern rage for utility has fortunately spared, leaving the noble old rooms to the undisturbed possession of stirring memories and treasures of art. A sense of untouched mediævalism invades you at first en-

Italian Vignettes

trance. In the vast and vaulted stone hall, where all sounds echo hollowly among the massive pillars, and suits of armor and strange weapons loom grimly in the shadows, the page of history seems to roll back till you stand in the torture-chamber of five centuries ago, amidst the victims of that Fulcieri da' Calboli who, as Podestà,

“ Many of life deprived, himself of fame.”

The clang of the gate, opening to admit other visitors, makes you start with an apprehension of dragging chains; and in the ear of your fantasy are the whisperings of many voices—threats in some, in others horror, or defiance, or



The vast and vaulted stone hall . . .

Stones of Florence

despair. It is almost with a breath of relief and escape that you push open the low door which leads into the court—the dazzling open court, with its cloister, round-arched and vaulted, running around three sides; its wealth of rich coloring; its myriad beauties of line and decoration. In the arcade and in certain small rooms which open from it, are sheltered various pieces of statuary, Michelangelo's "Victory" among them; but it is not on these forms of cold marble that you find your eyes dwelling. Instead you cross the broad flagged space and ensconce yourself in the arcade on the left, near the entrance wall with its plaques of heraldic carv-

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ings and inscriptions. Before you is the beautiful carved staircase, with its guardian lion, leading to the open loggia of the second floor; higher still in the stone wall are Gothic windows, through whose ruby and purple panes the light falls in soft, amethystine richness. No matter with how gray a tapestry of clouds the sky above the great pile be hung, there seems no lack of color, ever, in this wondrous court. Warm and beautiful and dignified and rich, it would need for its right description the word-painting of a Tennyson; and for its creation it needed the mailed hands of a race long since passed away—a race who were



*The beautiful carved staircase, with its
guardian lion . . .*

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lawless and bloody and cruel, barbarians according to every standard of our civilization, yet who cherished in their strong breasts a flower of chivalric poetry for which we should perhaps to-day have far to seek.

Passing upstairs, you will find that the charm laid upon you by the court remains undispersed. From the loggia with its bronze bells—those tongues of ancient Florence that still tell even in their silence of sorrow and of gladness, of alarms and of festivals,—you pass on the right into a spacious, knightly hall, peopled now by the works of Donatello, originals and casts. Here is the splendid old “Marzocco,” the

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stone lion who once stood guard over the Palazzo Vecchio; and the slender, rigid St. George, his shield in front of him, and every straight, clear-cut line full of strength and a stern simplicity. They harmonize, both of them, with their surroundings. The Marzocco's rugged form speaks eloquently of the drama of the Commune as it played itself out before him, there in the Piazza della Signoria, the heart of the city; while the St. George seems to embody the very spirit of a nobly militant knighthood.

“ Spirits of old that bore me,
And set me, meek of mind,
Between great dreams before me,
And deeds as great behind,

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Knowing humanity my star
As first abroad I ride,
Shall help me wear, with every scar,
Honor at eventide.

“ Let claws of lightning clutch me
From summer’s groaning cloud,
Or ever malice touch me,
And glory make me proud.
O give my youth, my faith, my sword
Choice of the heart’s desire:
A short life in the saddle, Lord !
Not long life by the fire.

“ I fear no breathing bowman,
But only, east and west,
The awful other foeman
Impowered in my breast.
The outer fray in the sun shall be,
The inner beneath the moon ;
And may Our Lady grant to me
Sight of the Dragon soon ! ” *

* Louise Imogen Guiney: “ The Knight Errant: Donatello’s St. George.”

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It was in this hall that the members of the General Council of the Commune were wont to hold their meetings. Beyond is the stately room, blazoned with heraldic devices, which was the audience chamber of the Podestà, and opening from the latter, the same official's private chapel—a juxtaposition which seems somehow suggestive of the intimate relation maintained in those days between Church and State. Magnificently illuminated manuscripts, their pages heavy with gold and a-glow with color, are collected in the anteroom; and high up on the rear wall of the chapel proper, amidst the defaced remains of the frescoes that once cov-

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ered it like a tapestry, there stands out the pure profile under the scholar's red cap which the world has come to accept as the typical representation of Dante. Modern criticism—that iconoclast—refuses to countenance the pleasant tradition that makes Giotto the painter of the portrait, and indeed will not admit of its being even a contemporaneous one; nevertheless, for the student of the "Divinia Commedia," this broad, high brow and these thin lips, tight shut as if in bitter secret scorn, will always possess a deep imaginative truthfulness.

On the same floor with the chapel are several other rooms, containing bronzes

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of more or less interest—Giovanni da Bologna's graceful Mercury among them, and the designs offered by Ghiberti and Brunelleschi in the competition for the Baptistry doors. Then if you will climb a little higher by a narrow staircase, you may enjoy a very feast of the delicate enameled terracotta work of the Della Robbias. Tenderly charming indeed are these *tondos* and plaques, with their gentle Madonnas and plump Babies, their clear coloring of blue and white and green, their exquisite encircling garlands of interspersed flowers and fruits. But none the less, as you take your way downstairs once more, through the nobly

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proportioned halls, across the court into the grim Hall of Armor, and so back to the street and the Twentieth Century, you find yourself accompanied less by the recollection of any specific thing seen, than by an impression of a whole of harmony and significance which, untouched by any modern or discordant note, captures the imagination and sinks richly into the memory.

It was the very morning after our visit to the Bargello, I remember, that we took our way over to the Piazza San Marco, with its Church and Convent of the same name—historic ground for the student of Florentine story, and sacred for him to whom Fra Angelico is dear

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and Savonarola a venerated martyr. The little church has been much restored, and is gloomy and chill within; yet it is not hard for the imagination to call up some of the stirring scenes once enacted there—that memorable evening, for instance, when the mob that had gone out the day before to see Savonarola's doctrines tried in the Ordeal by Fire (and gone in vain), attacked the building during service-time, shrieking out imprecations on the Frate for their disappointment; while behind barred doors the friars made valiant resistance, even resorting to the use of fire-arms, till they were quelled by the authority of Savonarola himself.

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Passing from the church into the convent alongside, you enter a very different atmosphere. Here are no memories of turmoil and bloodshed, but only a great peace and quietude brooding over the two cloistered courts with their grass and flowers, over the dim halls and the tiny empty cells. Fra Angelico, guardian spirit of the place, has left his seal upon the very first of these courts in the lunettes that crown its five doorways. Over the entrance of the Guest Chamber is the most beautiful of all—Christ as a pilgrim being received by two Dominicans. The sad yet benignantly lovely face of the Son, and the eager, welcom-

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ing hospitality in the attitudes and expressions of the monks, give the little composition a charm of tenderest appeal.

Off this court opens also the great Refectory of the convent—bare and deserted now, save for the sort of pulpit where the reader used to stand during meals, and the frame in which was enshrined Angelico's large tabernacle picture. On the end wall is a fresco by Sogliani, representing St. Dominic and his monks at table, being fed by angels—a composition full of life and actuality, the diverse expressions displayed by the good brothers being particularly well rendered. Especially charming is

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the young Frate on the right, whose youthful eagerness is being so gently but firmly rebuked by one of his elders.

A little farther around the court is the entrance to the Chapter House which, in "Romola," George Eliot makes the background of Dino's death scene. Here is the great frescoed Crucifixion that is surely one of Fra Angelico's grandest, as it is one of his largest compositions. In the center hangs the agonizing Christ; below, at the foot of the Cross, kneels the white-haired St. Dominic, with *such* sorrow in his face; while at one side is gathered the crowd of spectators—depicted, these latter, with a power of characteri-

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zation, of individualization, which one is little apt to attribute to the gentle Frate, but which appears again in the row of seventeen miniature heads running along the base of the fresco and representing various celebrated members of the Dominican Order.

A narrow passage leads from the first into the second and larger court, with its lovely garden and noble trees. Here it is well to rest awhile, looking up at the yellow walls of the convent that shut the world away, listening to the high treble of the birds and the occasional deeper note of a bell sounding purely across the distance, and letting the sweet remote peace of it all sink

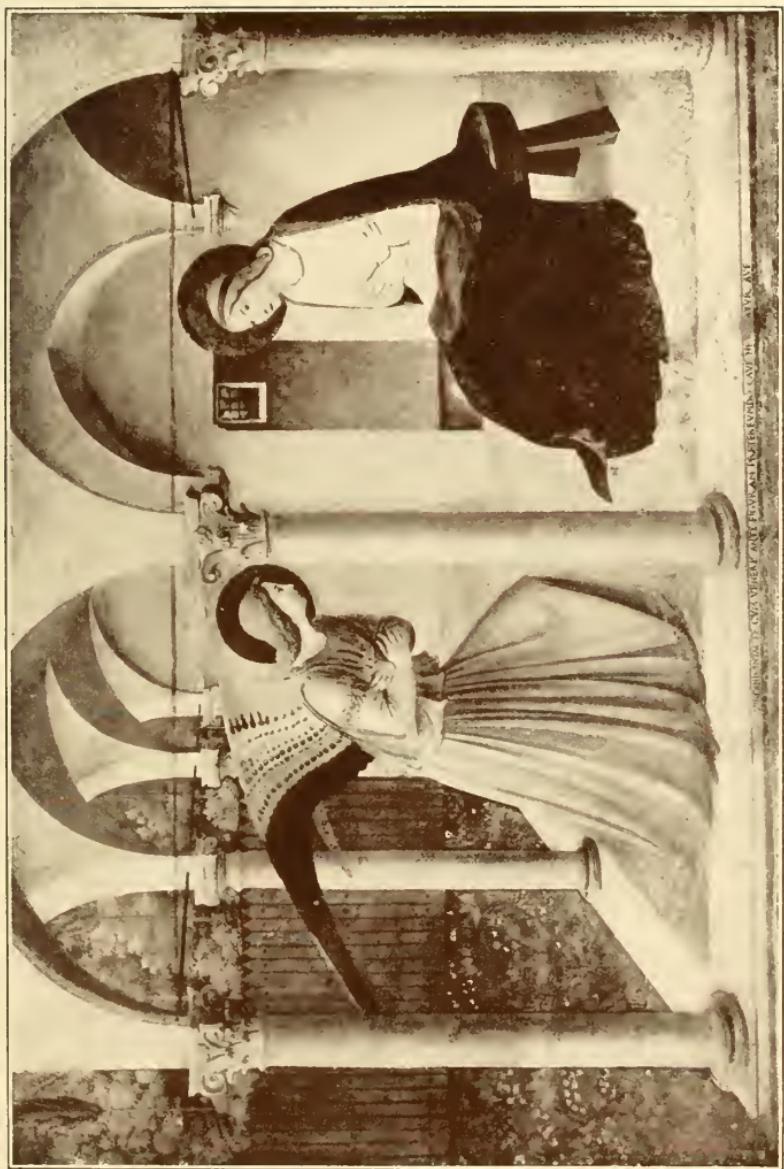
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comfortingly into your heart. Then, when you climb the narrow stairway that gives the world entrance into the heritage left it by the Beato Angelico, you will be prepared to appreciate to the full the greeting of that tender “Annunciation,” in the presence of which surely no brother could have needed the reminder of its inscription: “When thou shalt have come before the image of the spotless Virgin, beware that by negligence the *Ave* be not silent.”

From the landing-place before the “Annunciation,” corridors branch off to right and left, bordered on either side with the quarters of the monks. Ah,

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those cells!—narrow and dim, yet luminous with the pale frescoes that make each one a shrine. Here a Transfiguration, a Nativity, a Madonna and Child; there a white, ethereal Coronation; everywhere the figure of St. Dominic, gravely beautiful, now poring over a book, now sorrowing at the foot of the Cross, now standing triumphant among other famous members of his Order. Here it is that we see the apotheosis of the Blessed Brother's genius; here, on these rough walls a charm that shrinks timidly away in the crowded atmosphere of galleries and the company of Venuses and those opulent Madonnas who are little better,



*'When thou shalt have come before the image of the spotless Virgin,
beware that by negligence the Ave be not silent' . . .*

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blossoms delicately and perfectly in spiritual loveliness.

A goodly place, too, is the magnificent Library, redolent still of scholarly dignity, although the shelves that line the walls are empty of the great volumes once their pride. Instead, spoils of precious illuminated manuscripts have been brought from many a dissolved convent to lie open on broad tables and rejoice the eyes of students of to-day; and among these are several which a pleasant tradition ascribes to the patient art of the Beato Angelico's own brother—a monk likewise, Fra Benedetto da Mugello.

In this hall, however, it is another

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spirit which is predominant—a spirit of the Church Militant. Here Gerolamo Savonarola spoke for the last time to the assembled brethren of his convent, on Palm Sunday, 1498; and from here he went out to imprisonment and death; while just a little beyond, at the end of the passage, are the three small rooms—opening one into the other—where he studied and planned and dreamed in the days when he was Prior of San Marco. They are full of relics, these cells—books annotated in his own hand, a rosary, a crucifix—while reigning over them all is the Frate himself, his harsh, strong profile standing out from the blackness of Bartolommeo's can-

Savonarola's Cell



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vas as it must have stood out against the austere background of the monastic walls as he sat here of old, perhaps writing the fatal letters calling upon the powers of Europe to depose the Pope and reform the Church—those letters that made sure his already planned doom.

“I will return without fail to comfort you, dead or alive,” he is reported to have said to his monks when he was bidding them good-bye; and in a sense the prophecy is fulfilled. His spirit does indeed haunt San Marco, but purged of its restlessness, its inconsistencies, full of the same holy peace which that other earlier spirit of the painter-

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monk has left behind him “to the glory of God.” The quintessence of all that was most ideally true and fine in the ecclesiastical life of the Middle Ages —that is what San Marco is significant of to-day; as the Bargello is significant of all that was most ideally high and beautiful in the worldly life of the same period. And in the remembrance of those who have known and loved them, they mingle and blend, this church chaunt and knightly poem, rich melodies from a past

“Never to be again.”

XI

A VENETIAN MONAS-
TERY

A VENETIAN MONASTERY

SIGNORINA, un piccolo giro a San Lazzaro prima di tornare?"*

We were putting off from the landing-place at the Lido as our gondolier murmured the question, and I nodded in answer with that blissful acquiescence in the course of events which is apt to take soft possession of the sojourner in Venice. None of us had ever heard of San Lazzaro before. It might be an island, or it might be a church; it might be within a distance of

* A little turn to San Lazzaro before going back?

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a few yards, or it might be halfway to Chioggia. What matter? So long as we continued to drift dreamfully over an opalescent lagoon that melted by imperceptible gradations into an equally opalescent sky, the direction we followed was a thing of small moment. Angelo, however, was not minded to let us forget in such lotos-eating our manifest duties as sightseers; and presently when his vigorous strokes had brought us through many a cross-current to a little spot of verdure which revealed itself on closer inspection as an island, he gave a quick turn to his oar and shot the gondola into a tiny slip beside a flight of worn stone steps.

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“Ecco, San Lazzaro, signorina,” he remarked, holding out his hand with the evident expectation of assisting us to alight.

The prospect was sufficiently enticing. Trees hung their green plumage over our heads, and the song of birds floated in the still air. Nevertheless, he who has once yielded himself to the charm of the gondola, is not to be won from among its cushions without difficulty, and I made no motion to rise as I instituted further inquiries.

“What *is* San Lazzaro, Angelo? What is there to see?”

“But much, much, signorina,” urged the gondolier. “It is the Convent of

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the Armenian Brothers, very learned men, and rich also. One of the *frati* will tell the signorina all, and show the garden and the *convento*."

Evidently Angelo was not to be gainsaid. We disembarked, and in a few moments found ourselves under the guidance of a black-habited monk, whose dark, square-trimmed beard and grave, strong features bore an unmistakably Eastern stamp. He led us first into the cloister—a spot that has blossomed into fragrant beauty under the loving tendence of one of the brothers, who, we were told, takes an especial delight in all growing things. Roses twine themselves about the col-



He led us first into the cloister . . .

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umned arcades, touching the rough stone with delicate bloom; more roses shower their petals from many a bush; while pansies and carnations, and a hundred like simple flowers, make waves of color in narrow beds or flame in earthenware pots. It is a spot to make one in love with solitude and meditation. Even Byron's uneasy spirit, one fancies, must have been soothed by its quiet charm during those months he spent here, when he was studying Greek in preparation for the expedition from which he was never to return. It is pleasant to think of such an interlude in so stormy a life; pleasant to imagine the poet wandering through the silent

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garden, and forgetting for a while disappointed hopes, restless ambitions, and the tumult of feeling and passion, in the ordered monotony of the convent's daily routine. We went upstairs, later, to the little room he occupied, and saw the desk at which he wrote and worked. The Visitor's Book is kept there now—full of names of the many travelers, famous and undistinguished alike, who yearly come to the island to hear the monks' tales of "il poeta inglese."

San Lazzaro, however, has much of interest besides its Byronic associations. Its brothers are all scholars, deeply versed in Oriental lore, and laboring in-

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defatigably to spread among their fellow-countrymen of Armenia the knowledge and precepts of Christianity. In the long library, the light falls mellowly on many a time-stained volume; while downstairs one room is filled with the most modern of printing-presses, whence issue translations of the Bible and various religious and educational works in numerous Eastern dialects. Our guide remarked that all the finest of their presses bore the names of American makers, and showed us specimens of the work they turned out. One little book was printed in thirty-six different languages, including Hebrew, Sanskrit, and Greek.

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From the workrooms we passed into the Refectory, where a long table was spread for the evening meal. The coarse cloth that covered it was exquisitely clean; glass caraffes of red wine and slim brown loaves of bread were placed at intervals down the center; and the rays of the declining sun, creeping through the windows, flecked the walls of the room with golden light. Everything seemed to bespeak an order, a quiet, a content, that one felt to be enviable. I remarked as much to our guide, adding that I thought I should like to come there to live. He shook his head with a slow smile.

“Mademoiselle would soon grow tired,” he said.

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Mademoiselle would soon grow tired . . . Would she? I wondered, as we followed the monk out through the garden again to a point commanding a wider view over the lagoon. The water lay outstretched under the luminous sky, an expanse of liquid mother-of-pearl. Here and there a dash of emerald or a gleam of warm-colored walls indicated an island; and away in front of us a line of brown piles, like gaunt sentinels, pointed the channel to that distant mirage of domes and towers that was Venice. The air was full of a drowsy fragrance; the trees and bushes of the little garden whispered softly to each other of the secrets told them by the birds. Surely there ought to be a

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charm to defy weariness in any such remoteness from the world's dust and din. To rise in the mornings at the mellow summons of the chapel bell; to pore over the garnered wisdom of the ages in the library, feeling oneself not an inheritor merely, but an active agent of transmission; to dream in the garden when working hours were over, brought nearer to the great heart of things by a thousand subtle allurements of nature; to watch sunrises and sunsets succeed each other, and learn not to worry overmuch about "to-morrow" but to savor to the utmost the joy and to meet steadfastly the sorrow of "to-day,"—would not such a life hold possibilities of rich-

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ness far exceeding any known to the average existence, lived in the turmoil of a constant strife after place and power? At any rate, it is, I am sure, good for us to feel that some such lives *are* being lived somewhere, even in this Twentieth Century; and as we watched San Lazaro fading into the sunlit distance, I seemed still to see the black figure of our monkish guide standing amidst the garden green, a symbol of the large simplicity and graciousness that we so often miss in the hurry of our busy way.

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